

SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

A BIOGRAPHY

GAUTAM CHATTOPADHYAY



राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

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Foreword

This biography of Subhas Chandra Bose is being brought out on the occasion of the country-wide celebrations of his birth centenary. Subhas Chandra Bose, often simply Netaji to his countrymen, is perhaps the most legendary figure in India's struggle for freedom. In 1944, he had written: "I have been a dreamer of dreams. But the dream of all my dreams, the dearest of dreams of my life, had been the dream of freedom for India". His entire life was a struggle to make this dream come true and it was in the pursuit of this dream in his own way that he parted company with many of his associates and comrades and adopted a path different from theirs. Since the late 1920s, he had been a leader of the radical trend in the Congress and of the youth and before the end of the 1930s, he had become, in the words of Rabindranath Tagore, *Deshanayak*. One of his dreams for India struggling for independence had been for her to have her own army of liberation. It was in fulfilment of this dream that the Azad Hind Fauj (Indian National Army) was formed by him outside India for the liberation of India. While differences among scholars over Netaji's understanding of world developments and the path he had chosen would continue, there has been no doubt during the past half a century and more that his object, as he himself said, 'in leaving India was to supplement from outside the struggle going on at home'. Or that the inspiration that he and his Azad Hind Fauj provided during the Second World War and after was a major factor in the post-war anti-imperialist upsurge in the country and in the achievement of freedom.

The Council is grateful to Professor Gautam Chattopadhyay for agreeing to our request to write this biography. In writing

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The Council is grateful to Professor Gautam Chattopadhyay for agreeing to our request to write this biography. In writing

this biography, Professor Chattopadhyay has made use of his immense scholarship. He has also brought to bear on his writing his own enormous experience as a student leader in Bengal, organising massive protest meetings and rallies, which took the form of a revolt in the city of Calcutta, against British imperialism and in defence of INA and its men. This book is a work of historical scholarship. It gives a critical account, as all historical works must, but not entirely an impersonal one. The appendices, a selection from Subhas Chandra Bose's speeches, included by him provide a useful supplement to the biography.

I am grateful to my colleagues, Professor Arjun Dev, Shri Nasiruddin Khan and Professor Ms Indira Arjun Dev, who looked into various aspects of Professor Chattopadhyay's manuscript and made it ready for publication, and to Dr Hari Dev Sharma and his colleagues at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library for their help in making available to the NCERT a number of photographs included in the book.

I hope the book would be found useful by young students as well as by the general reader, and would provide them with a better understanding of a critical period in the history of India's struggle for freedom and the role which Subhas Chandra Bose played in it.

A.K. SHARMA

Director

New Delhi

23 January 1997

National Council of Educational
Research and Training

Introduction

We are approaching the 50th anniversary of Indian independence. It will be an occasion for politicians, statesmen and historians alike to recall the colourful history of India's struggle for independence, spread over more than a century. Indian independence was won not only due to the contributions of a number of outstanding leaders but also due to the heroic role of nameless millions, without whose active participation a handful of leaders, however great they may have been, could have achieved very little. Hence, when we get down to the task of writing a political biography of any one of the titans of our freedom struggle, we should study and critically analyse their role vis-a-vis the masses.

Historians of all trends will perhaps agree that the most outstanding architect of India's struggle for independence and of our mighty million-headed mass national movement was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. With his innovative technique of non-violent non-cooperation and *Satyagraha*, he roused India's backward and usually timid peasant millions, instilled in their consciousness a kind of fearlessness, which our octogenarian stalwart historian Professor Hirendranath Mukherjee calls *abhaya*. There were other giants in our mighty national struggle like Jawaharlal Nehru, Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Subhas Chandra Bose. But all of them in the beginning (and some till the end) were the followers of Gandhiji. At major turning points of our national struggle, differences arose between Gandhiji and some other leaders. Yet it was only in the case of Subhas Chandra Bose that differences with Gandhiji ultimately led to a total break. Subhas charted an alternative course for himself, a march towards freedom through a different path. However, both Gandhiji and Bose never looked at each other as opponents

but continued to love and respect each other. In many of his radio speeches from various parts of South-East Asia as the head of the Azad Hind Government, Subhas Chandra saluted Gandhiji as the supreme leader of our struggle for independence. Gandhiji also, differing sharply ideologically from Subhas Chandra and his INA, nonetheless paid glowing tributes to the great contribution of Subhas to India's struggle for freedom. We shall remember all this as we get down to the task of writing an objective detailed biography of Subhas Chandra Bose, on the occasion of his birth centenary, for the younger generations of today, tomorrow and the day after. It is a difficult task to write a popular biography of so colourful a man, with so many complexities, understandable to teenagers yet faithful to scholarship. All that I can say is that we shall give it a good try in respectful homage to the man who was born Subhas Chandra Bose on 23 January 1897 but who disappeared like a brilliant meteor on 20 August 1945 as Netaji of India's armed struggle for national liberation.

GAUTAM CHATTOPADHYAY

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" They call me a dreamer.
I confess I am a dreamer.
I have always been a dreamer
— even when I was a child.
The progress of the world has
depended on dreamers and
their dreams, — not dreams of
exploitation and
aggrandisement and
perpetuating injustice,
— but dreams of progress,
happiness for the widest
masses, liberty and
independence for all nations."

Subhas Chandra Bose

CHAPTER 1

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

Subhas Chandra Bose was born in Oriya Bazar, Cuttack at noon on Saturday 23 January 1897. This was the year when the might of the British empire seemed to be at its height and Queen Victoria was celebrating her Diamond Jubilee. Substantial sections of educated Indians, even those who were in the Indian National Congress, were singing praises of the 'liberal' British rulers. Only a handful like Bal Gangadhar Tilak in Poona, Bipin Chandra Pal in Bengal and Lajpat Rai in Punjab had started talking in terms of *Swaraj* being the birthright of Indians but their impact on the national movement was as yet hardly discernible. The man who at that time made the greatest impact on the Indian militant youth was Swami Vivekananda. He had just returned from the World Conference of Religions at Chicago. It was, therefore, natural that Vivekananda and his writings influenced the early life of Subhas.

His father Janakinath Bose had come to Cuttack from the village of Kodalia in South-24 Paragana, only a few miles from Calcutta. Subhas never lived in Kodalia and in fact visited the ancestral village on rare occasions. Nonetheless, a few words need be said about Kodalia and its surroundings. There are three villages cluttered together—Changripota, Kodalia and Harinavi, whose common railway station now bears the illustrious name of *Subhasgram*. Forty years before the birth of Subhas, a radical Bengali Dwarkanath Vidyabhushan, a friend and follower of the great reformer Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, brought out a Bengali newsweekly called *Somprakash* which sharply criticised all aspects of



Subhas Chandra Bose as a young boy

British misrule in India. The paper also stood against blind faith, superstition and obscurantism and supported such progressive social movements as Vidyasagar's efforts to get widow remarriage legalised. Dwarkanath's nephew, the eminent Brahmo reformer Sivnath Shastri was born in the house of Dwarkanath and spent his early years there. There were many other lesser luminaries who were born in one or the other of these three villages, one of whom, some ten years senior to Subhas, was the young revolutionary Narendranath Bhattacharya, later to become famous as Manabendra Nath Roy. Although Subhas neither lived in these villages nor visited them often, still the stories of radicalism of this area must have reached even distant Cuttack and could have acted as a major influence in shaping the future life of young Subhas Chandra.

Subhas's father Janakinath Bose was an eminent lawyer in Cuttack. He was a Hindu by religion but also an admirer of the liberal teachings of Brahmo reformers and non-conformist Christians. He was a simple generous man but Subhas as a child found him somewhat distant. This was not surprising because Subhas was the sixth son and the ninth child in the family. Subhas was much closer to his mother Prabhabati Devi. She had no formal school education and yet she was instrumental in guiding the education of her children.

Many standard biographers of Subhas have pointed out that as a child Subhas was rather lonely and one of his closest friends in his childhood was a simple servant girl called Sarada who called him Raja. Maybe, Subhas's deep love for the common people of our country owed its beginning to this association of his childhood days.

At the very early age of five, Subhas was sent to the Protestant European School run by the Baptist Mission in Cuttack. This school where mainly European children of the town studied with a sprinkling of Indians, was an English medium school. No Indian language was taught there. Moreover, the European children were, if not racists, certainly arrogant and looked down upon 'natives' like Subhas. Though



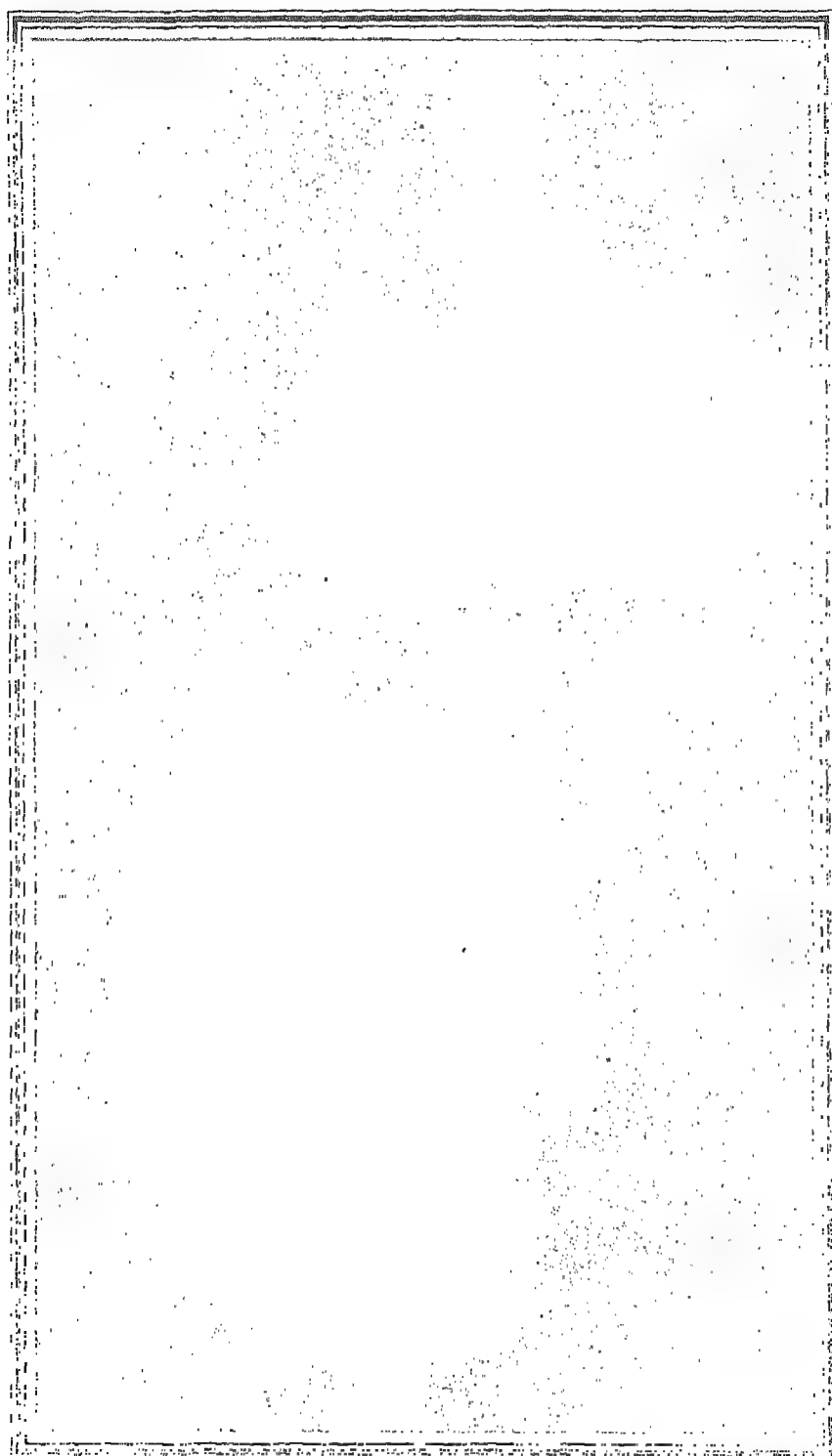
Subhas Chandra Bose with his father

very good at studies, he spent seven not entirely happy years in this school and said good-bye to it 'without any regret'. Many years later in his unfinished autobiography *An Indian Pilgrim*, referring to this period Subhas wrote that he lived in two worlds.

In school, Subhas was compelled to learn an alien language to the total neglect of any Indian language. As he himself points out, in later life this enabled him to have a good grasp over the English language, although he detested it in his schooldays. At home mainly Bengali was spoken. His mother knew no other language. In the evening she used to recount to Subhas and the younger children of the household, stories from the great Indian epics — *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* — as well as from *Puranas* and Indian folklore. Unlike her husband, she was a traditional devout Hindu.

In 1909, twelve-year old Subhas left the Baptist Mission School and entered the reputed Ravenshaw Collegiate School at Cuttack where he spent the next four years and passed the Matriculation Examination. Bengali was by then compulsory at the Matriculation stage under the Calcutta University, to which the Ravenshaw Collegiate School was affiliated. This was an Indian school and Subhas was fortunate to get for a few years a dedicated headmaster, Beni Madhav Das. It was his new headmaster who deeply influenced Subhas in both religion and nationalism by very often talking to his more receptive pupils about Swami Vivekananda and his teachings. Beni Madhav was transferred within a couple of years and such were his strong ties with his pupils that Subhas was visibly upset. He now read various kinds of books eagerly, among which he mentions Mazzini's *Duties of Men* and Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* together with the works of Vivekananda.

In a letter to his brother Sarat Chandra Bose in 1913, he wrote, "...What was India and what is she now?....! All is gone. ...But there is hope yet—the angel of hope has appeared in our midst to put fire in our souls and to shake off our dull sloth. It is the saintly Vivekananda. There stands he, with his angelic appearance, his large and piercing eyes



Subhas Chandra Bose's mother

and his sacred dress to preach to the whole world the sacred truths lying embedded in Hinduism !”

In a letter to his mother in the same period, Subhas wrote, “Will the condition of our country continue to go from bad to worse—will not any son of Mother India in distress, in total disregard of his selfish interests, dedicate his whole life to the cause of the Mother ?”

It was at this time that Subhas was searching for a *guru*, who would resemble Vivekananda. By now he had developed intimate friendship with another Bengali boy, Hemanta Kumar Sarkar, who would be his close friend for many years to come. During a long vacation, both of them left home and went to such distant places as Gaya, Benares, Hardwar and so on in search of a *guru*. However, Subhas was disappointed and many years later wrote that this tour which lasted nearly two months brought them in touch with many men who were only superficially saintly. Subhas observed in *An Indian Pilgrim* that this tour opened his eyes to some of the latent shortcomings of Hindu society and he returned home a sadder and wiser young man having lost much of his admiration for ascetics and recluses.

In 1913, Subhas passed the Matriculation Examination standing second in order of merit. Khitish Prasad Chattopadhyay (father of this author), who was also born in 1897, matriculated in the same year standing sixth in order of merit from the Metropolitan Institution, Calcutta. His intimate classmate was Dilip Kumar Roy, son of the poet Dwijendralal. Both of them were highly impressed by the brilliant result of a boy from distant Cuttack and all three quickly became intimate friends, a friendship which lasted a lifetime.

In 1915, Subhas successfully passed the Intermediate Examination and continued his education at the Presidency College, Calcutta, with Philosophy Honours as his main subject for B.A. degree. Dilip and Khitish were also students of Presidency College. As is well known, this was a government college and many of the sons of top government officers studied there. But this was also the period when

revolutionary nationalism had captured the imagination of young Indians. The *Komagataru* episode of the heroic clash between several scores of *Ghadar* revolutionaries with the British army near Budge Budge (close to Calcutta) in September 1914 and more so the martyrdom of Bagha Jatin and his comrades in an unequal battle near Balasore in Orissa had electrified young Indians. The students of Presidency College too could not remain unaffected by this. A confidential note of the Education Department, Government of India, in November 1916 records that "there had been a ferment among students in general, due mainly to what may be called causes of a political character ...leading in many instances to manifest spirit of insubordination and a reluctance to render unquestioning obedience to rules and orders promulgated by lawful authority".

An incident took place in Presidency College which changed the smooth course of Subhas's academic life. E.F.



Undergoing military training in the University Training Corps

Oaten was Professor of History in Presidency College. In a function at the Eden Hindu Hostel, Prof. Oaten was reported to have said, "As the Greeks had Hellenised the barbarian people with whom they came in contact, so the mission of the English is to civilize the Indians". The students of the college felt greatly insulted. By January 1916 similar other utterances by Oaten infuriated the students and in protest they went on strike from 10 to 13 January 1916. On 15 February when Oaten was coming down the staircase of the college from the second floor, he was attacked by a group of students and beaten up. As they attacked him from behind, Oaten was not able to identify any of his attackers but a bearer of the College testified that he had seen Subhas Bose and Ananga Mohan Dam among the attackers. The whole British ruling class in Calcutta was up in arms and demanded drastic action against the culprits. Subhas Chandra Bose and Ananga Mohan Dam were forthwith expelled from the college and to our eternal shame, even the Calcutta University ruled that these two young men would not be allowed to take admission in any other college under its jurisdiction.

Did Subhas actually beat up Oaten? Many years later in *An Indian Pilgrim* Subhas wrote that he did not beat up Oaten but was only an eye-witness to the whole event. His close friend Khitish Chattopadhyay was absent from the college on that fateful day but many years later, when asked by his son about the episode, he said that Subhas was incapable of attacking anybody from behind.

In 1973, at the First International Seminar on Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian Freedom Struggle held at the Netaji Bhawan in Calcutta, Prof. Oaten himself sent a paper on Subhas Chandra Bose as he remembered him. Referring to this incident in his paper, he pointed out that he had received only a few bruises and was not "brutally assaulted" as the Committee of Enquiry set up by the government had stated. Was Subhas one of the attackers? Oaten was not sure but he stated in his paper that in general Subhas Chandra Bose was a very well-behaved student. The

incident at that time raised a controversy among Bengali intellectuals: was it permissible for a student to raise his hand against his teacher, even if that teacher had misbehaved ? The decisive majority emphatically replied in the negative, which perhaps explains why the Calcutta University was also so stern in its attitude towards Subhas. However, the reaction of Rabindranath Tagore, who at many turning points of our history acted as the conscience of India, was different. In one of the routine addresses to the students of Santiniketan immediately after the Oaten episode, he said that it was undoubtedly a reprehensible act for a student to beat up his teacher, but what was a student to do when a teacher deviated from his noble profession and insulted the motherland of the students?

One year later the Calcutta University relented but the Presidency College did not take him back. Even in Free India the authorities of the Presidency College did not care to clear the name of Subhas Chandra over the Oaten incident. It is only in 1996, as the nation prepares for his birth centenary, that the present principal of the Presidency College has publicly declared that on the basis of the evidence preserved in the College records, he considers that great injustice was done to Subhas Chandra in 1916 and the College now atones for it by placing him in the honoured rolls of the College and by holding a series of lectures and seminars portraying his glorious role in our freedom struggle.

To come back to the story of his life. In 1917 the Calcutta University withdrew its rustication order on Subhas and in July that year he was admitted in the B.A. Class of the Scottish Church College, thanks to its liberal principal Dr Urquhart.

In 1919, Subhas passed the B.A. Examination from the Calcutta University standing first class second in Philosophy Honours. In 1917, the Government of India had started the University Training Corps giving military training to the students. Subhas enthusiastically joined this volunteer force. Years later in *An Indian Pilgrim*, Subhas wrote, "This training gave me something which I needed or which I lacked. The

feeling of strength and of self-confidence grew still further. As soldiers we had certain rights which as Indians we did not possess ...the first day we marched into the Fort William, to bring our rifles, we experienced a queer feeling of satisfaction, as if we were taking possession of something to which we had an inherent right but of which we had been unjustly deprived."

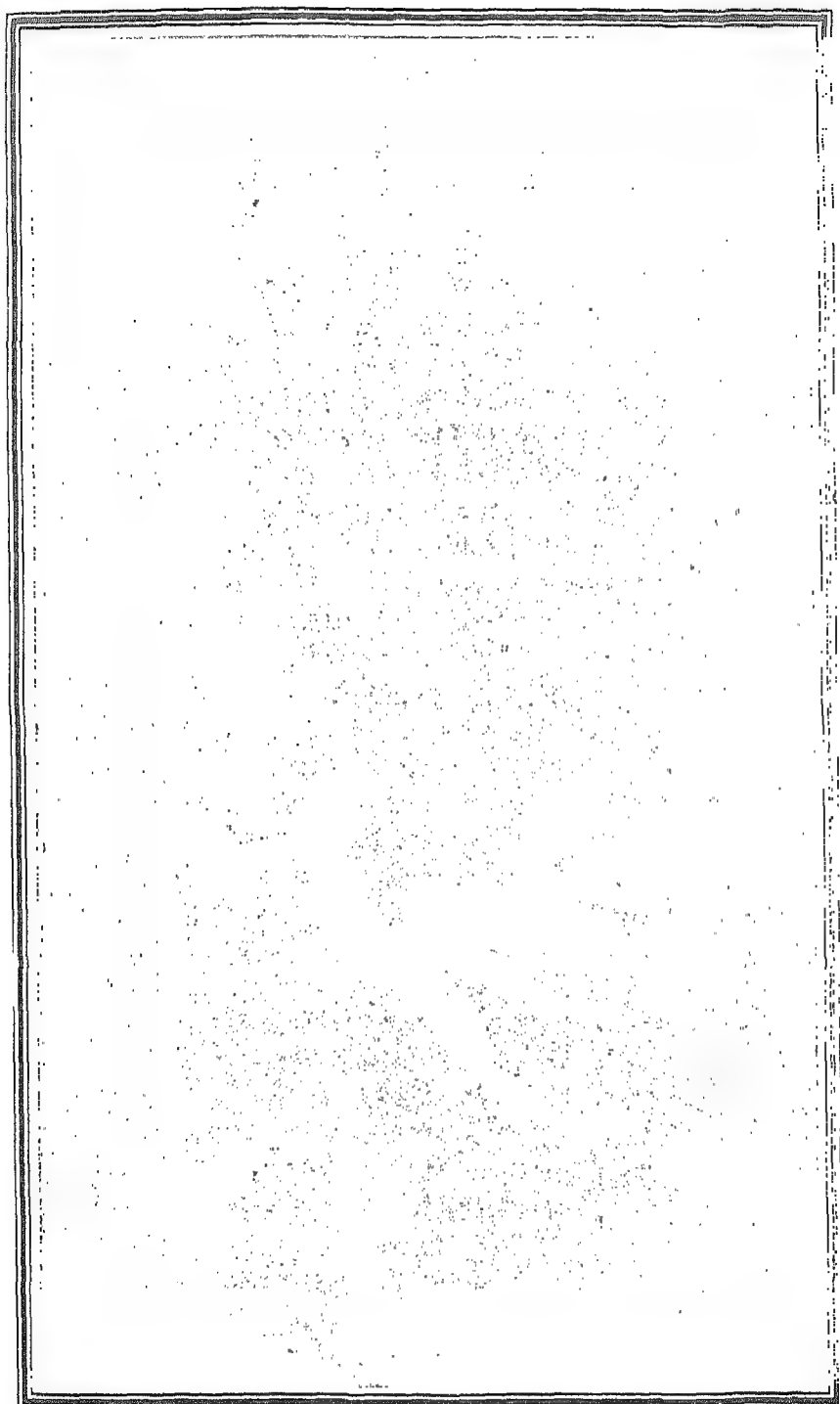
Towards the close of 1919, Subhas joined the Department of Experimental Psychology for his M.A. degree. It was at this stage that his father Janakinath Bose in consultation with his second son Sarat Chandra Bose told Subhas that he would like to send him to England to sit for the I.C.S. Examination. As we know, by this time Subhas had become strongly anti-British and a fervent nationalist but he was also keen on a British university degree. There was great inner turmoil in his mind. This is clear from a letter which he wrote to his dear friend Hemanta Sarkar on 26 August 1919. This letter appears in his *An Indian Pilgrim*. Subhas Chandra Bose wrote, "If I now refuse to study for the Civil Service, the offer to send me to England will be put into cold storage ... should I miss this opportunity? On the other hand, a great danger will arise if I manage to pass the Civil Service Examination. That will mean giving up my goal in life". Ultimately he decided to go to England. He sailed on 15 September 1919 and reached London on 20 October.

CHAPTER 2

SUBHAS AT CAMBRIDGE

At first Subhas Chandra stayed with his elder brother Satish who was preparing to become a barrister. Subhas wanted to get admitted to some college under the Cambridge University but the deadline for admission to the University was over. However, two of his intimate friends, Dilip Kumar Roy and Khitish Prasad Chattopadhyay were already in Cambridge studying in the Fitz William Hall. They earnestly pleaded the case for the admission of Subhas and with the help of Mr Reddaway, the Dean, he was admitted to a college under the Cambridge University and by early November 1919 he had started his studies in right earnest. The I.C.S. Examination was to take place in August 1920. So Subhas plunged himself into the study for the Mental and Moral Sciences Tripos. In his unfinished autobiography he wrote, "...the study of Political Science, Economics, English History, and Modern European History proved to be beneficial. This was specially the case with Modern European History. Before I studied this subject, I did not have a clear idea of the politics of Continental Europe.... I studied Modern European History and some of its original sources like Bismarck's Autobiography, Metternich's Memoirs, Cavour's Letters, etc. These original sources, more than anything else, I studied at Cambridge, helped to rouse my political sense and to foster my understanding of the inner currents of international politics".

Subhas liked many things he saw in England and was impressed by the freedom that existed in the University and elsewhere. Yet he never forgot that the British were the



*Subhas Chandra Bose (standing right) in Cambridge
in 1920 with Khitish Prasad Chattopadhyay,
Dilip Kumar Roy and C.C. Desai*

colonial masters of his country. In a letter written on 12 November 1919 to his friend Hemanta Sarkar in India, Subhas wrote, "Whether one wills it or not, the climate of this country makes people energetic. The activity you see here is most heartening. Every man is conscious of the value of time and there is a method in all that goes on.... Students here have a status — and the way the professors treat them is different. One can see here how man should treat his fellowman. They have many faults — but in many matters you have to respect them for their virtues." Yet the strong undercurrent of deep feeling against the British was also there. In the same letter there is a significant line: "Nothing makes me happier than to be served by the whites and to watch them clean my shoes."

Subhas, Dilip Roy and Khitish Chattopadhyay used to stay together, had similar views and came to be known as "the trio". All three, during their holidays, used to visit a Punjabi, Dr Dharmaveer who was much senior to them and lived in Lancashire. The three young Indians were particularly fond of the European wife of the doctor whom they called *didi* and they had great affection for their two young daughters Sita and Lila. Dilip Roy recalls: "We often talked far into the night with a glow of heart that only youth can command. Sitting before the crackling fire, we fell to discussing the portents of the Labour Party in England and Communism in Russia."

Roy once said that maybe the new revolutionary proletarian forces would help India liberate herself but Subhas differed. Roy recounts that Subhas emphatically asserted that "Sri Aurobindo was perfectly right when he said in the Swadeshi days that no outsider would help India. If we ourselves cannot win our freedom none will come to our rescue."

Subhas Chandra Bose had not yet decided what he would do about the coming I.C.S. Examination but the strong pull of the impending national struggle against the British was making a strong impact on him. In a letter to a friend in India at this time, Subhas wrote, "Swami Vivekananda used to say

that India's progress will be achieved only by the peasant, the washerman, the cobbler and the sweeper.... The Western World has demonstrated what the 'power of the people' can accomplish. The brightest example of this is, — the first socialist republic in the world, that is, Russia. If India will ever rise again—that will come through that power of the people".

In the same period, the inner turmoil in the mind of Subhas can be best realized from a letter that he wrote on 23 April 1921 to his elder brother Sarat Chandra Bose saying that he was opposed to becoming a Civil Servant because that would mean that he would have to owe allegiance to the British colonial rulers. He wrote: "I have come to believe that compromise is a bad thing—it degrades the man and injures his cause... one compromise always leads to another.... We have got to make a nation and a nation can be made only by the uncompromising idealism of Hampden and Cromwell."

Many friends of that period have pointed out that Subhas Chandra was very active in the Indian Majlis at Cambridge. He rapidly became the unquestioned leader of the Indian students at Cambridge and they chose him as their representative to present their case before the Committee on Indian Students set up by the India Office. Subhas powerfully argued that to come to Britain to sit for the I.C.S. Examination and to become a barrister or a Chartered Accountant, Indian students had to incur enormous expenses. This could be avoided if the I.C.S. Examination was also held in India and educational facilities for the study of law and accountancy were improved in India. The testimony of Subhas created a great impression among all the Indian students then residing in Britain. His close friend Khitish was full of praise for it in an article written many years later. But praise came even from other Indians who were not so close to Subhas Chandra.

Janakinath had been insistent that Subhas should sit for the I.C.S. Examination. He did so in August 1920, when six places were to be filled up for the Indian Civil Service on the basis of the results of this examination. Subhas had prepared

for this examination only for nine months and was convinced that he would fail. When the results came out, it was seen that only the second place was taken by an Englishman; otherwise out of the first six places five were taken by Indians. Subhas was fourth in order of merit. He was astonished. But in one sense he was happy. He told his friend Dilip Kumar Roy that he wanted to show the British that he was their equal and he had done it. Janakinath was now proud of his son and wanted him to join the I.C.S. but his friends like Hemanta Sarkar from Calcutta were writing to him that the post of I.C.S. was incompatible with the ideal of dedicating oneself to the cause of Indian freedom struggle.

Subhas Chandra Bose was now torn between his loyalty to his parents and his duty to himself and to the motherland. Subhas wrote a passionate letter to Sarat Bose that he could in no case sign a document and accept a service owing allegiance to the British Crown. His close friends Dilip and Khitish were with him in his refusal to accept the post of a civil servant. Later in his unfinished autobiography Subhas recorded that Mr Reddaway of Fitz William Hall, who had helped him to gain admission in the Cambridge University, encouraged him to follow his own convictions and remain firm in his resignation.

Eminent biographers and historians have recorded that ultimately Sarat Bose also endorsed Subhas's decision and that probably his mother also agreed. Subhas had already written a letter to Chittaranjan Das, then the towering nationalist leader in Bengal that he wanted to come back to India to serve the motherland and would do whatever work C.R. Das had in mind for him. C.R. Das promptly wrote back encouraging him and asked him to come back to Calcutta.

Subhas Chandra Bose was now able to make up his mind and wrote a letter on 22 April 1921 to Montagu, Secretary of State for India, stating that "I desire to have my name removed from the list of probationers in the Indian Civil Service". The die was cast and the very next day on 23 April 1921, Subhas wrote a letter to his elder brother Sarat informing him of his decision of a final break with the Raj

and stating that "I received a letter from Mother saying that in spite of what father and others think, she prefers the ideal for which Mahatma Gandhi stands. I cannot tell you how happy I have been to receive such a letter... as it has removed something like a burden from my mind".

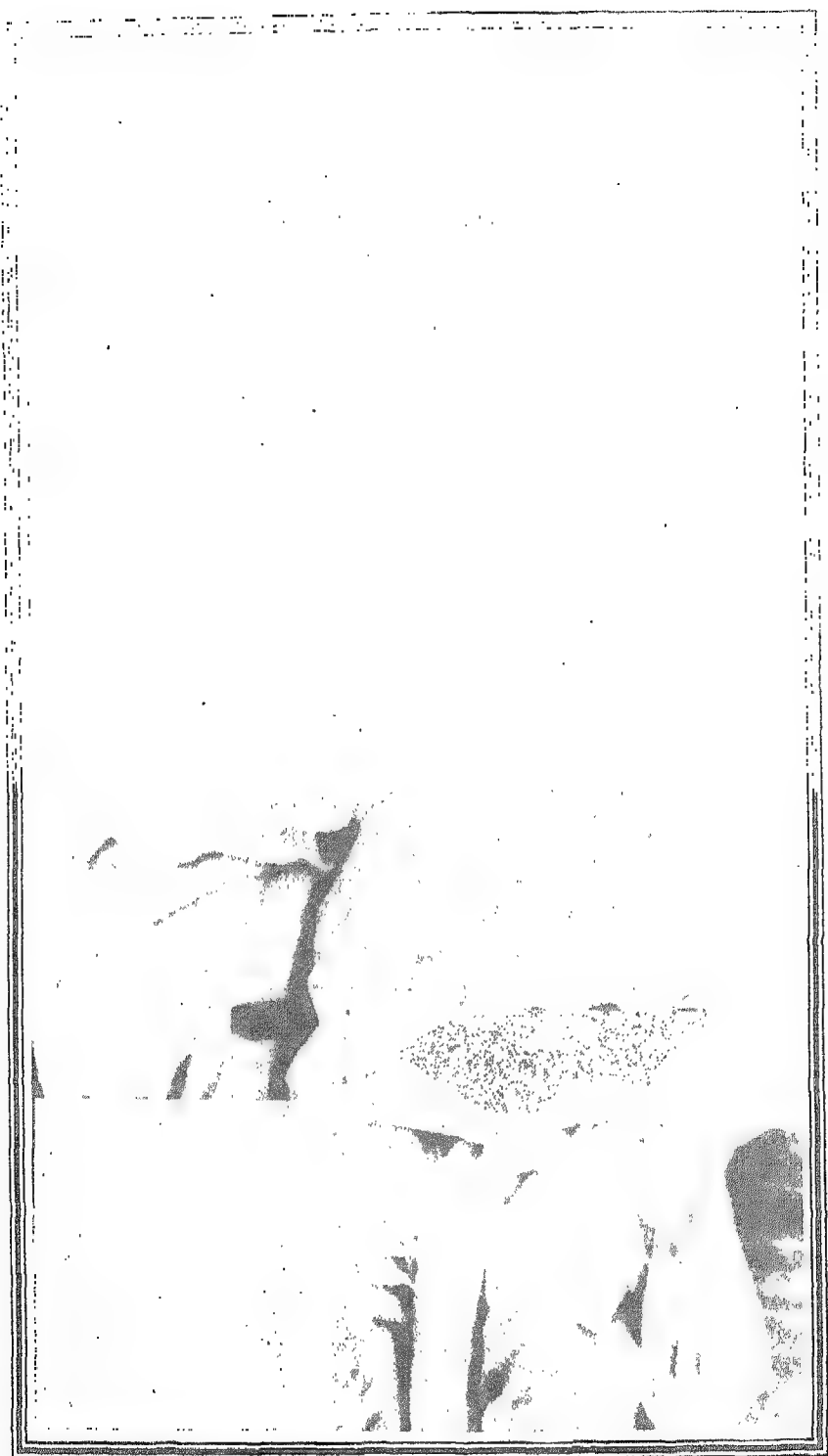
However Subhas Chandra sat for his Tripos examination but his heart was no longer in it. He passed his examination but received very poor marks compared with his previous result. He was now in a hurry to reach Calcutta and decided to sail for home in June 1921. He did not even pick up his own Tripos diploma and left it for his friend Khitish to collect. One biographer of Bose records that on his return journey, Subhas Chandra travelled in the same boat with poet Rabindranath Tagore, which was a mere coincidence. He is reported to have told Tagore that a new leader had emerged in the Indian national movement with a unique revolutionary method. The man was Gandhi and the method was non-violent non-cooperation. Subhas Chandra Bose was not yet clear as to what he would do once he was back in India but, whatever it was, his life had irrevocably changed.

CHAPTER 3

THE DISCIPLE OF DESHBANDHU

Subhas Chandra Bose landed in Bombay in the middle of 1921 and immediately went to meet the supreme leader of the national struggle – Mahatma Gandhi. Years later Subhas graphically described this meeting which would be the beginning of his quarter century long complex relationship with Gandhiji. He recorded: “I reached Bombay and obtained an interview with Mahatma Gandhi. My object was to get from him a clear conception of his plan of action....There were three points which needed elucidation – how were the different activities... going to culminate in the last stage of the campaign... how could mere non-payment of taxes or civil disobedience force the government to retire from the field... and how could the Mahatma promise ‘Swaraj’ within one year. His reply to the first question satisfied me; his reply to the second question was disappointing and his reply to the third was no better”. Thus, as is evident from this description, from the very outset Subhas was respectful towards Gandhiji but never uncritical. He was determined to jump into the fray of the Non-Cooperation Movement led by Gandhiji but he never accepted Gandhiji’s concept of non-violence being the key to India’s political struggle for freedom. Gandhiji was quite impressed with the young man and told him to go to Bengal and place himself at the disposal of Chittaranjan Das.

Chittaranjan Das, during his early years, was the topmost barrister of Bengal, enormously wealthy but staunchly nationalistic. He had strong links with the national revolutionaries of Bengal and often helped them with money, shelter and legal defence though he never subscribed to the

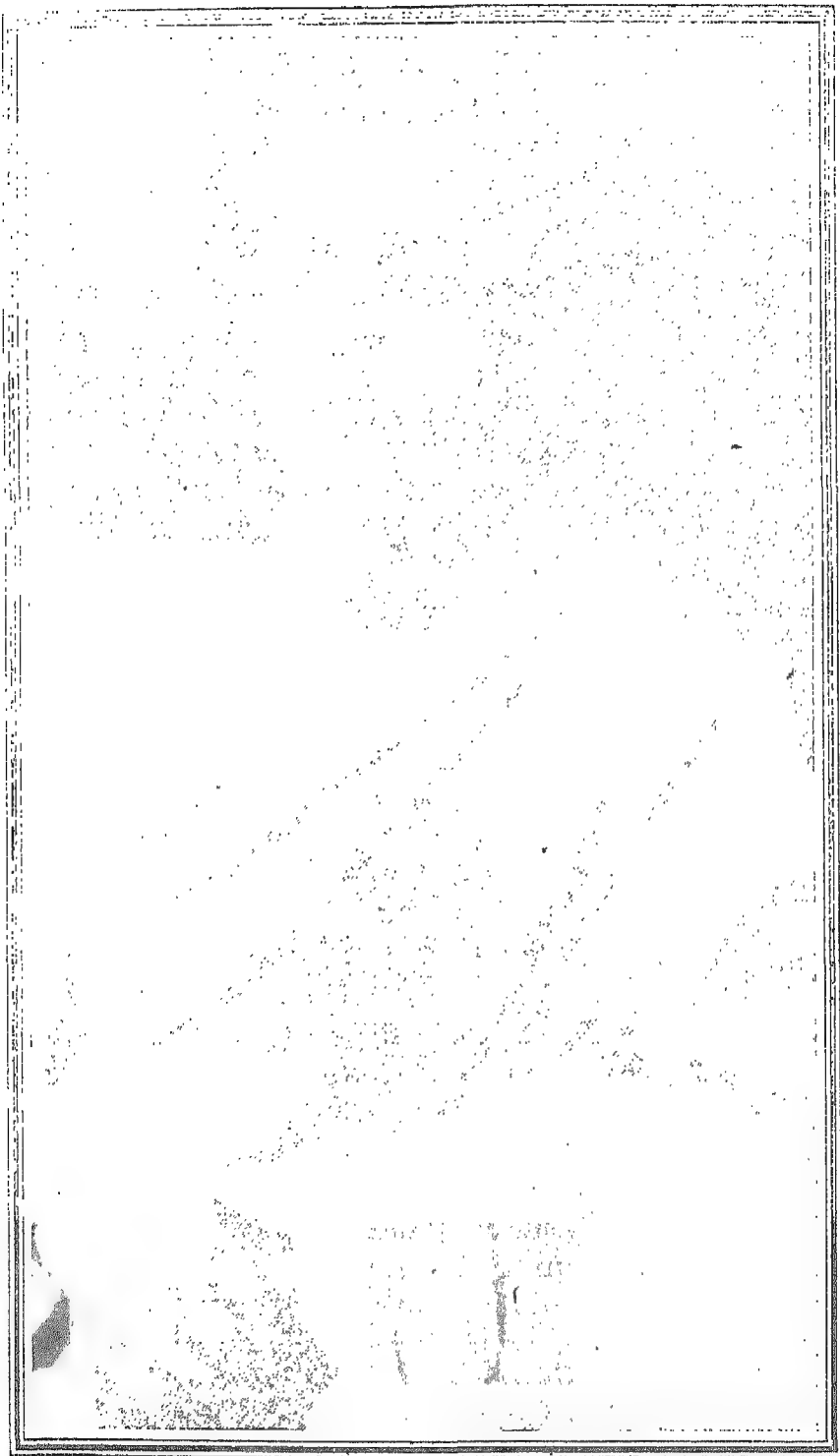


C. R. Das and Basanti Devi

strategy and tactics of revolutionary terrorism. Initially he had been a disciple of Bipin Chandra Pal and an opponent of Gandhi. In December 1920, Das had gone to attend the Nagpur Session of the Indian National Congress, with a large number of delegates from Bengal determined to vote down Gandhi's proposal to launch a non-violent non-cooperation movement for *Swaraj*. Gandhiji, in the meanwhile, had forged an alliance with the All India Khilafat Committee. The basis of this joint front was that both *Swaraj* and *Khilafat* would be the twin aims of the movement. The Khilafat Committee, grateful for this unexpected support from the topmost leader of the Congress, had elected Gandhiji as the President of the All India Khilafat Committee. At Nagpur, in the background of unprecedented Hindu-Muslim unity, Gandhiji passionately appealed for support from all delegates to win "*Swaraj* within one year". He also asked for sacrifice from the delegates in the true spirit of a *Satyagrahi*.

Almost every delegate was overwhelmed by Gandhiji's appeal, including his erstwhile opponents like C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru and Lala Lajpat Rai. Das was so overwhelmed that he not only moved the main resolution for launching the movement for *Swaraj* under the supreme command of Gandhiji, he also declared that he promised to donate his entire property and wealth to the nation. A deeply moved Gandhi embraced Das on the rostrum and gave him the title of *Deshbandhu* (friend of the motherland). Henceforth Das was known all over India by this title. It is worth recording here that over a thousand delegates present at Nagpur—Congressmen and Khilafatists alike—almost unanimously voted in favour of launching the non-violent non-cooperation movement for *Swaraj* from January 1921. Only two persons voted against the motion – Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Mohammed Ali Jinnah. It is not surprising, therefore, that in later life Malaviyaji became a leader of the All India Hindu Mahasabha while Jinnah became the leader of the Muslim League and masterminded the campaign for Pakistan.

When Subhas reached Calcutta in the second half of



As Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Corporation

1921, C.R. Das was virtually the uncrowned king of Bengal. He was not a revolutionary but he was undoubtedly a very great patriot and a master tactician. As far back as 1917 in his presidential address to the annual session of the Bengal Provincial Congress, C.R. Das had issued a clarion call to the people of Bengal: "We shall accept no self-government... unless it recognises and includes within it the teeming millions of India. When I ask for self-government for India I am not asking for another bureaucracy, another oligarchy in the place of the bureaucracy that there is at present. In my opinion, bureauracy is bureaucracy, be that bureaucracy of Englishmen, or of Anglo-Indians or of Indians. We want no bureaucracy... we want self-government by the people and for the people... we want self -government based on the will of the people of India".

In the same speech Das had stressed the importance of forging Hindu-Muslim alliance if *Swaraj* was to be attained. He also wanted the western educated middle class nationalists to become Indianised and reach out to the toiling masses both in the cities and in the rural areas. Later on, in 1923 in a famous speech as the President of the All India Trade Union Congress, Das was to concretise his ideas with the famous declaration that *Swaraj* in India must be "for the 98 percent".

It was this transformed C.R. Das whom young Subhas met in Calcutta in 1921. In *The Indian Struggle*, he gives an emotional description of his first meeting with Deshbandhu: "I can still picture before my mind's eye his massive figure as he approached me. He was not the same Mr Das whom I had once approached for advice when he was one of the leaders of the Calcutta bar and I, a student, expelled from the university for political reasons. He was not the same Mr Das who was earning thousands a day and spending thousands in an hour. He was however the same Mr Das who had always been a friend of the youth, could understand their aspirations and sympathise with their sorrows. During the course of our conversation I began to feel that here was a man who knew what he was about, who could give all that

he had and who could demand from others all that they could give – a man to whom youthfulness was not a shortcoming but a virtue. By the time our conversation came to an end my mind was made up. I felt that I have found a leader and I meant to follow him.”

In Bengal, two important events took place in 1921 – the massive no-tax campaign in the district of Midnapore and the mass influx of tea garden labourers to Chandpur, the savage police repression against them and the consequent Assam-Bengal Railway strike. Under pressure of the Non-Cooperation Movement, the colonial government promised to introduce a measure of self-government for the villages whereby union boards could be established for every group of villages in Bengal. This Act was severely criticised by nationalists of Bengal, firstly because all power was still retained in the hands of district officials and not transferred to the villagers and, secondly, the establishment of union boards entailed additional taxation on the villagers with no additional advantages in return. Under the leadership of Birendranath Sasmal, an advocate, the people of Midnapore started a massive agitation for withdrawal of the application of this Act from their district and refused to pay the taxes levied by the newly-established union boards.

The colonial rulers unleashed strong repressive measures – mass arrests, forcible seizure of property and intimidation by police and the military. Subhas chandra writes that this “Orgy of repression continued throughout the year 1921 but the act had ultimately to be withdrawn in 1922. The success of this no-tax campaign gave considerable strength and self-confidence to the people of Midnapore”.

The other event is related to the two provinces of Bengal and Assam. As is well known, the European tea-planters of Assam savagely oppressed the million strong tea-garden labourers of that province, who were treated practically like semi-slaves. A detailed description of this movement is available in Amalendu Guha's *Planter's Raj to Swaraj*. The message of *Swaraj* had filtered down to these tea-garden labourers and they chose a novel method for protesting

against the planters' oppressive regime. Thousands of them left the tea gardens and marched towards Chandpur, a major railway station in East Bengal on the banks of the river Padma. They declared that they were doing this in response to Gandhiji's call for *Swaraj*.

The colonial rulers allowed them to reach Chandpur. One night while they were sleeping, they were savagely attacked by armed Gurkha police on the order of a cruel Indian officer. There was strong resentment throughout Bengal and C.R. Das rushed to Chandpur accompanied by his wife Basanti Devi and the pioneering woman labour leader Santosh Kumari Devi. The railway workers of the Assam Bengal Railway as well as workers of the Inland Steamer Services went on general strike in solidarity with the tea garden labourers at Chandpur. J.M. Sengupta, a well-known barrister and leader of the Congress in Chittagong, emerged as the key leader of this strike. Later on Sengupta was to become a veritable rival of Subhas for the leadership of the Bengal Provincial Congress after the death of C.R. Das. Yet Subhas Chandra Bose was liberal enough to give due praise to J.M. Sengupta for organising this strike in his famous book *The Indian Struggle*.

All these events had happened before Subhas arrived in Calcutta but in July-August 1921 they were still green in the memory of the people in Bengal. The event which was to first test the capabilities of young Subhas Chandra was the issue of the arrival of the Prince of Wales in India on 17 November 1921. The Congress Working Committee had called for a total boycott of the Prince's visit and a hartal and black flag demonstrations wherever the Prince went. C.R. Das gave Subhas the charge of organising the volunteers for a total hartal and black flag demonstration in Calcutta on 17 November. Subhas worked day and night like a Trojan, inspired the teenage volunteers and the hartal as well as the demonstration was a total success. Overnight young Subhas Chandra Bose shot into fame as a rising national leader of Bengal, the chief lieutenant of Das and hero of the youth.

The friends of Subhas, still in Cambridge, were eagerly

waiting for newspaper reports of Calcutta's response to the visit of the Prince of Wales. Many years later, Khitish Chattopadhyay recalled that most of the English newspapers on the next day had headlines that the boycott in Calcutta was a total failure and that thousands of people had lined the city streets welcoming the Prince and shouting *ki jai* (long live). The youthful nationalists at Cambridge were thoroughly depressed but they were also puzzled by the reports because the Indian people never shout only *ki jai*. On the same evening a friend of theirs arrived from London with a copy of the *Daily Herald*, organ of the British Labour Party. Its headlines were: Boycott in Calcutta a total success. Thousands of people lined the city streets, waving black flags and shouting *Swadhin Bharat ki jai*. There was also a line about the role of the young captain of the volunteers, Subhas Chandra Bose. His friends in Cambridge were now overjoyed and disgusted at the distortion of the news by the Reuters, a news agency.

The Prince was scheduled to visit Calcutta on 24 December and Subhas under instructions from Deshbandhu prepared for a bigger mass action. This time the government took no chances and thousands of volunteers were arrested and the two city prisons were filled to capacity. Camp prisons were opened but they too were filled in no time. Subhas Chandra records: "The government then resorted to drastic action, Orders were issued for the arrest of Deshbandhu Das and his close associates and by the evening of December 10, 1921 we were all in prison".

The arrests in Bengal and elsewhere, instead of putting a damper on the movement, helped to intensify it. The Prince was to arrive in Calcutta on 24 December 1921. To arrange for his reception, the Viceroy Lord Reading arrived in Calcutta a few days before that. The members of the Calcutta Bar had previously agreed to invite the Prince of Wales to a dinner but such was the resentment at the arrest of Deshbandhu, Subhas Chandra and others that the Bar now refused to hold the reception. The Government of India was thus in a tight corner.

Subhas Chandra Bose vividly described the situation in *The Indian Struggle* : "Though the Civil Disobedience Movement was strongest in Bengal, it was fairly strong throughout Upper India and in fact no province was free from it. In addition to this, the Akali Movement in the Punjab, the No-Tax campaign in Midnapore in Bengal and the Moplah Rebellion in Malabar in South India intensified the crisis. Outside India the Sinn Fein Movement in Ireland had been largely successful, a treaty with Great Britain having been signed on 6 December, 1921. Some months earlier, Afghanistan had entered into a treaty with Mustafa Kamal Pasha and this was followed by a treaty between Persia and Soviet Russia. In Egypt, the nationalist Wafd Party of Syed Zaghlul Pasha was strong and active. Thus it was apparent that the entire Moslem world was combining against Great Britain and this had an inevitable reaction on the Moslems of India. In these circumstances it was no surprise that the Government of Lord Reading should be anxious for a settlement with the Congress."

It is well known that the British Government's peace feeler was communicated to the Moderate leader Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya who interviewed Deshbandhu in Presidency Jail in Calcutta and also met the outstanding nationalist Muslim leader Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. The offer was that if the Congress agreed to call off the Non-Cooperation Movement immediately, so that the Prince's visit would not be boycotted by the public, 'the government would simultaneously withdraw the notification declaring Congress volunteers illegal and release all the *Satyagrahis*'. The Viceroy was prepared to give a further assurance that the famous Ali Brothers who had been sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment at Karachi would also be released. Deshbandhu and Maulana Azad were willing to accept such a compromise but the younger section of the nationalists were opposed to it. Subhas Chandra wrote, "When Deshbandhu broached the subject to us and asked for our opinion, the younger section including myself vehemently opposed the idea of an armistice on those terms."

Deshbandhu and Azad sent a joint telegram to Gandhiji requesting him to accept the proposed terms for settlement. Gandhiji did not agree. He wanted the immediate and unconditional release of the Ali Brothers and all the Khilafatist prisoners together with the Congress *Satyagrahis*. Gandhiji also wanted that the British Government should announce a specific date for a Round Table Conference with the nationalists. The Viceroy did not agree to make any further concession and the efforts for a settlement fell through. The Non-Cooperation-Khilafat Movement continued unabated and in the words of Sir Valentine Chirol "India was on the brink of an unarmed revolt."

We have to pause here for a moment and discuss briefly the controversy regarding the proposed settlement which did not materialise. It has already been noted that Deshbandhu, Maulana Azad and quite a few others (possibly Motilal Nehru) were strongly for a compromise at this stage but it was Gandhiji who took a more or less uncompromising position and scuttled the moves for a settlement. Subhas Chandra who was initially (in his own words) "vehemently opposed" to it ultimately rallied round to Deshbandhu's position. He writes, "The feeling among the political prisoners, as also among the Congress rank and file was that the Mahatma had committed a serious blunder."

Looking back on the events of those days after 75 years, despite our great admiration for both Deshbandhu and Subhas Chandra, we have a feeling that on this occasion the Mahatma was right. To have withdrawn the movement with only the release of Congress *Satyagrahis* and not all the Khilafatist prisoners including the famous Ali Brothers, would have been looked upon as an act of betrayal by the Congress of the Muslims and might have disrupted the Congress-Khilafat unity. Secondly, without agreeing to a specific date for the Round Table Conference, the British Government could have easily delayed such a conference, allowing the movement to weaken.

In fact, when the next annual session of the Indian National Congress was held in December 1921 at

Ahmedabad, the mood of the delegates was quite militant. C.R. Das, who was elected President of this session, was still in jail and in his place an outstanding Khilafatist leader Hakim Ajmal Khan took the chair. Subhas Bose wrote: "There was great enthusiasm at the Ahmedabad Congress and the main resolution was one which called upon the whole country to adopt a policy of mass civil disobedience... defying the emergency ordinances and courting imprisonment."

On 1st February 1922, Gandhiji sent a week's ultimatum to the Viceroy that unless *Swaraj* was conceded he would launch a country-wide no-tax campaign, starting first in Bardoli district of Gujarat. The temper was high in Bengal, U.P. and Andhra and a massive no-tax campaign was about to break out. At this point at a place called Chauri Chaura in U.P., savage repression was launched on peasant *Satyagrahis* by the police. Unable to control their fury the people retaliated, set fire to the police station, killing some policemen. Gandhiji was horrified and unilaterally suspended the country-wide Non-Cooperation Movement indefinitely. C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru and others who were in jail were deeply resentful. Subhas Chandra was beside himself with grief and anger and wrote, "To sound the order of retreat just when public enthusiasm was reaching the boiling-point, was nothing short of a national calamity."

Gandhiji now asked all his followers to carry on a country-wide campaign against untouchability and other constructive activities in villages. C.R. Das and others wanted to contest the next elections to the Provincial Assemblies, defeat the pro-British loyalists and, in the words of Das, "wreck the Constitution from within". C.R. Das presided over the Gaya session of the Indian National Congress in December 1922 and put forward this proposal as his new tactical line. As Gandhiji was opposed to it, the majority of delegates voted against it but Motilal Nehru, Vithalbhai Patel and Hakim Ajmal Khan supported the motion. Deshbandhu Das and Motilal Nehru announced that they were forming the Swaraj Party within the Indian National Congress to carry out this line. The Congress was virtually split into two camps - the

Gandhiites and the Swarajists or the No-changers and Pro-changers as they came to be known then. Subhas Chandra enthusiastically opted for the Swarajist line and became the chief lieutenant of Deshbandhu in Bengal.

With the collapse of the Non-Cooperation-Khilafat Movement, Hindu-Muslim unity also suffered a serious jolt. The Hindu Mahasabha under the leadership of Swami Shraddhananda started a strong Hindu fundamentalist movement, known as the *Shuddhi Movement*. It was most unfortunate because at the height of the Congress-Khilafat Movement in 1921, Swami Shraddhananda had passionately advocated Hindu-Muslim unity, standing beside the Shahi Imam of Delhi in front of the famous Jama Masjid. The Muslim reaction was to launch the *tanzim* and *tabligh* movement which was equally aggressive and communal in character. Communal passions were now on the rise.

C.R. Das realized that without Hindu-Muslim unity, the Swarajists could not advance substantially in Bengal. So he negotiated with leading Muslim politicians of Bengal and a pact was signed between Hindus and Muslims, which later on came to be known as the Bengal Pact. By this time the Muslim leaders promised to support the Swarajist platform while the Swarajists promised to ensure a certain percentage of governmental job reservation for Muslims in Bengal. The Pact was quite popular with the Muslims but highly educated Bengali Hindus resented the job reservation for Muslims. At the Sirajgunge Provincial Conference of the Congress in Bengal, the Pact was endorsed only due to the threat of C.R. Das that he would resign if the Pact was rejected. It is to the immense credit of young Subhas Chandra that he firmly stood by C.R. Das and the Bengal Pact.

Surendranath Banerjea, who was Minister of Local Self-Government in Bengal, had amended the Calcutta Municipal Act in 1923. By this Act, larger powers had been conferred on the Municipality, the franchise had been considerably enlarged and the elective element strengthened. The Swarajists in alliance with the Muslims participated in the first election to the Calcutta Corporation under the new act

in 1924 and swept the polls. Deshbandhu was elected the first Indian Mayor of the new Calcutta Corporation and Shaheed Suhrawardy (who later on became Chief Minister of Bengal in 1946 as a Muslim Leaguer and still later founded the Awami League in East Pakistan) became the Deputy Mayor.

C.R. Das appointed Subhas Chandra Bose as the new Chief Executive Officer of Calcutta Corporation—perhaps the only administrative office that Subhas ever held. Deshbandhu wanted that free primary education should be given to Calcutta's toiling poor and the middle classes. He also wanted that the Calcutta Corporation should ensure low cost health facilities to the city's poor, laying emphasis on maternity centres for women. Das also felt the need to publicise the good work that the Swarajist-run Calcutta Corporation might do. So he asked Subhas to find suitable persons who could head the new education and health departments of Calcutta Corporation and to hunt out a talented nationalist journalist who could take charge of the publicity campaign.

Excellent work was done in a very short period despite the opposition of the colonial government. Subhas Chandra worked tirelessly and his contemporaries, and seniors like the revolutionary Upendranath Banerjee in their memoirs are full of praise for the work of Subhas as Chief Executive Officer.

Subhas himself crisply describes the work of the Swarajist-run Calcutta Municipality in *The Indian Struggle*: "Under the new regime new measures calculated to benefit the citizens were set in motion in quick succession. The newly elected Swarajist councillors and aldermen, including the Mayor all came dressed in home-made Khadi. Among the employees of the Municipality, Khadi became the official uniform. many of the streets and parks were re-named after India's greatest men. For the first time an education department was started and a distinguished Indian graduate of Cambridge K.P. Chattopadhyay was put in charge. Free primary schools for boys and girls sprang up all over the city. Health-associations financed by the Municipality were started

by every ward of the Municipality... dispensaries were opened by the Municipality in the different districts for giving free medical treatment to the poor. In purchasing stores, preference was given to swadeshi goods. In giving new appointments the claims of Moslems and other minorities were recognised for the first time. Infant clinics were set up in different parts of the city and to each clinic was added a milk-kitchen for supplying milk free to the children of the poor".

The *Calcutta Municipal Gazette*, an English weekly, was started as the journal of the Calcutta Corporation with Subhas's friend Amal Home, well-known for his courageous stand in Punjab in 1919 after the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, as the editor. The *Gazette* faithfully recorded all the good work done in Calcutta week by week and in 1931, it published boldly a photograph of Subhas, leading a Congress procession on 26 January as Mayor of Calcutta and getting badly beaten up by the police. This will be discussed at greater length in a later Chapter.

This good work was not to the liking of the government. An opportunity came for them to act. There had been a resurgence of revolutionary activities in Bengal from 1923 onwards. The government had passed an emergency ordinance called the Bengal Ordinance to arrest and detain suspected revolutionaries without trial. On 25 October 1924, in the early hours of the morning, the government arrested a large number of radical Congressmen in Calcutta and in other parts of Bengal accusing them of being revolutionaries. Among those arrested were two prominent Swarajist members of the Bengal Legislative Council — Satyendra Chandra Mitra and Anil Baran Roy as well as the young, Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Corporation, Subhas Bose. Subhas Chandra Bose wrote that far from being engaged in revolutionary activities then, he was engaged day and night in his duties at the Calcutta Corporation. *The Statesman*, then the mouthpiece of the European vested interests in Calcutta, defended the arrest of Subhas saying that he was the brain behind the revolutionaries.

Deshbandhu was greatly upset and in a famous speech in Calcutta Corporation from his chair as the Mayor, he passionately declared that to his knowledge the only crime that Subhas had committed was that he had loved his country and if "love of the country was a crime, I would rather be a criminal". A brief and unique chapter in the life and work of Subhas Chandra Bose was over.

CHAPTER 4

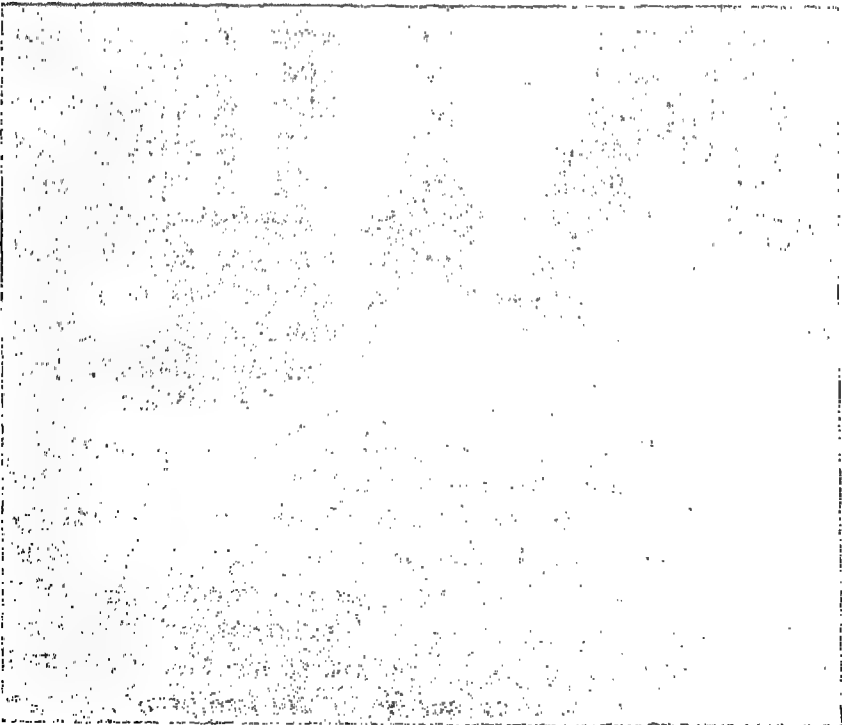
PRISON TERM IN BURMA

Subhas Chandra Bose was to spend nearly four years in prison, most of the time in the far-off jail at Mandalay in Upper Burma, where his great predecessor Bal Gangadhar Tilak had spent nearly six years in prison from 1908 to 1914. However, before we take up this prison phase in the life of Subhas, it would be worthwhile to examine briefly how far the government's charge that Subhas was one of the 'brains' behind the Bengal revolutionaries was correct. There is hardly any evidence in confidential police records or otherwise that Subhas was actively involved in revolutionary terrorism in Bengal. C.R. Das was even more distant from actively supporting the revolutionaries. Yet both Deshbandhu and his chief lieutenant Subhas greatly admired the courage, heroism and spirit of self-sacrifice of the young revolutionaries. To the militant youth of Bengal, they were heroes, and the poet Nazrul Islam's famous song "Durgam Girl..." had the moving lines "*Phastr Manche geye galo jara jibaner jayagana*" (Those who sang the song of life triumphant at the gallows), which was chanted in almost every student and youth rally.

On 12 January 1924, Gopinath Saha fired a shot at the notorious and oppressive police commissioner of Calcutta Sir Charles Tegart, but the shot missed Tegart and unfortunately killed an innocent English businessman Earnest Day. Saha was arrested, swiftly tried and sentenced to death. After the judge had sentenced him to death, Saha declared, "May every drop of blood of mine sow the seed of liberty in every Indian home". Gopinath was cremated in the compound of the Presidency Jail in Calcutta. Subhas Chandra Bose and the

well-known revolutionary Purna Das accompanied by many college students went to attend the cremation ceremony but were not allowed to enter the Jail. When Gopinath's brother Madan Saha came out with Gopinath's clothes Subhas movingly touched them, in salutation to the memory of Gopinath. According to Hemendranath Dasgupta, a biographer of Subhas, "This does not mean that Subhas entertained sympathy for terrorism but the spirit of sacrifice filled him with admiration".

The matter did not end here. At the conference of the Bengal Provincial Congress in May 1924, a resolution was passed in Bengali whose original translation was given as: "While adhering to the policy of non-violence, this conference pays its respectful homage to the patriotism of Gopinath Saha who suffered capital punishment in connection with Mr Day's murder." When Gandhiji learnt about this resolution, he was shocked. In a letter to C.R. Das he said that if the memory of Saha was to be saluted then there must be a qualifying



After his release from prison in Burma

phrase that his patriotic action was misguided. C.R. Das replied that the translation from Bengali was incorrect and that the qualifying phrase in fact had been used. The revolutionaries in the Bengal Congress Committee opposed Das's version of the original Bengali resolution and in this they were supported by Subhas. However, the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee confirmed the translated version as elaborated by C.R. Das.

The government, however, was now more than convinced that even if Subhas was not an active revolutionary, the revolutionaries enjoyed his patronage. Moreover what is now well-known to scholars is that during the period of 1922-24, Subhas extended a helping hand to at least two Communist revolutionaries who had come from Moscow and Berlin and were wanted by the British-Indian Intelligence Service — Nalini Gupta and Abani Mukherjee. The eminent Bengali intellectual Dr Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyay has testified that when his old friend, the hunted Communist revolutionary Abani Mukherjee, suddenly came to his house one evening in December 1922 and told him that he had a price on his head and immediately wanted a safe shelter, Suniti Kumar took Abani to his friend Dilip Kumar Roy. Dilip took Abani to his friend Subhas and Subhas requested the young revolutionary Santosh Mitra to give Abani a safe shelter to which the latter agreed. Similarly the Anushilan group of revolutionaries in Dhaka gave shelter to M.N. Roy's emissary Nalini Gupta at the request of Subhas. We know quite well that Subhas was not a Communist and that he had many differences with them but since he was convinced that the Communists were anti-imperialist revolutionaries, he never hesitated to extend to them a helping hand in their hour of need.

All these, no doubt, are clear evidences of the nobility of the character of Subhas Chandra Bose, but to the colonial rulers these were equally clear evidences that Subhas was a dangerous man from the point of view of the Raj. To them, therefore, his arrest on 25 October 1924 under the Bengal Ordinance was entirely justified. For the first few months,

he was kept in various jails of Bengal but very soon they shunted him off to far-off Mandalay. This was the period when politics in Bengal went through many ups and downs. The biggest blow was that on 16 June, 1925, while recovering from an illness at Darjeeling, C.R. Das passed away. Bengal and the whole of India received this news like a bolt from the blue. It was a doubly severe blow to Subhas in jail. About a decade later, Subhas wrote, "The death of Deshbandhu on June 16th, 1925 was for India a national calamity of the first magnitude...." He knew, more than anyone else, that situations favourable for wresting political power from the enemy do not come often and when they do come, they do not last long. While the crisis lasts, a bargain has to be struck. He knew also that to sponsor a settlement, when public enthusiasm is at its height, needs much courage and may involve a certain amount of unpopularity. But he was nothing if not fearless. He was conscious of his exact role, namely that of a practical politician, and he was therefore never afraid of courting unpopularity."

In Mandalay Jail, the treatment of the authorities towards Bose and his fellow prisoners was extremely unsympathetic, if not harsh. Subhas wrote many letters to the Chief Secretary of the Government of Burma (then a province of British India) protesting against the behaviour of the jail authorities, but to no effect. Hence on 18 February 1926, under the leadership of Subhas Chandra, his fellow prisoners in Mandalay Jail went on a hunger-strike. On 22 February, the political prisoners at Insein Jail in Burma joined this hunger strike. By the 8th day forced feeding of the hunger-strikers had started and entire nationalist India became gravely concerned. Subhas Bose lost much weight and Maulana Shaukat Ali, one of the two famous Ali Brothers, rushed to Mandalay with a letter from Sarat Bose urging upon Subhas to give up the hunger strike together with his friends. Shaukat Ali assured Subhas that his friends and comrades in India would take up their cause. On 4 March, approximately after two weeks of hunger strike, the government made concessions and Subhas and his friends

gave up their hunger strike.

Subhas summed up the result of this hunger-strike: "Our hunger strike was not meaningless or fruitless. Government has been forced to concede our demands... the biggest gain of hunger-strike is the inner fulfilment and bliss... thanks to this experience I have come to know myself far better and my self-confidence has increased many folds."

However, the health of Subhas continued to worsen and the government consented to a joint medical examination by the civil-sergeant Col. Kesall and Dr Sunil Bose, an elder brother of Subhas. They examined Subhas on 12 February 1927 and decided that he was probably suffering from tuberculosis which could be cured only by rest and medical attention outside jail. Dr Sunil Bose recommended that the best thing was to send Subhas to a sanatorium in Switzerland. The Bengal Government initially suggested that Subhas could be transferred to the Almora Jail, a hill-station in U.P. Ultimately, the government agreed that the family of Subhas Bose would take a house in Almora and that Subhas would stay there with his family only for three months and then proceed to Switzerland. Subhas at first was totally opposed to the idea of a conditional release and wrote a stiff letter to Sarat Bose on 4 April 1927. Ultimately he consented to the aforesaid agreement. On 7 May 1927 Subhas was put on a steamer sailing from Rangoon. Just before the steamer entered Calcutta, doctors of the Bengal Government examined Subhas and pronounced his condition serious. The Bengal Government now panicked and on 16 May 1927 they passed an order unconditionally releasing Subhas. He reached his family residence at Elgin Road, very sick but mentally very determined. On 6 May 1927, the day before Subhas boarded the steamer at Rangoon he had written a letter to his brother Sarat: "I am not a shopkeeper and I do not bargain. The slippery paths of diplomacy I abhor as unsuited to my constitution". Throughout the summer of 1927, Subhas recuperated in Shillong. After five months the doctors declared him medically fit and towards the end of October 1927 Subhas returned to Calcutta and to active

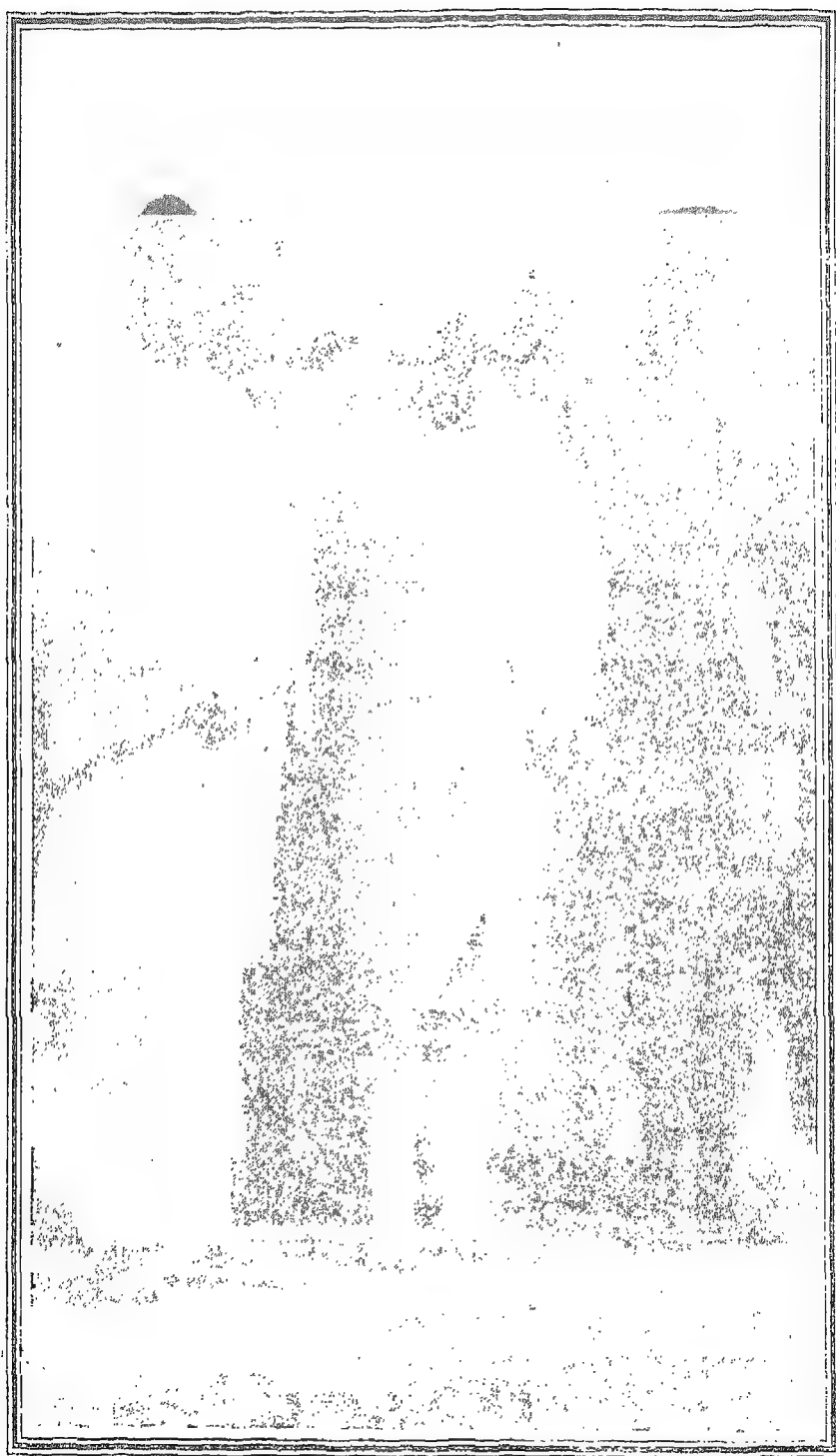
politics. Almost immediately after he was elected president of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and another chapter in his stormy life began.

CHAPTER 5

LEADER OF MILITANT NATIONALISTS

In November 1927 the Viceroy Lord Irwin made an announcement that an Indian Statutory Commission had been appointed consisting of mainly conservatives headed by Sir John Simon. Of the seven Members, five including the Chairman, were conservatives and two belonged to the Labour Party. It might be interesting to note that one of the Labour Members was Clement Attlee, during whose prime ministership in 1946-47 India won independence. The Commission was composed wholly of Englishmen and was charged with framing the future constitution of India. All shades of Indians were indignant at the exclusion of Indians from the Commission. Even the Indian Liberal Party, well-known for their conciliatory attitude towards the British, passed a resolution on the appointment of the Commission. It said, "The exclusion of the Indians is a deliberate insult to the people of India, as not only does it definitely assign to them a position of inferiority, but what is worse it denies them the right to participate in the determination of the constitution of their own country." The tenth session of the Liberal Federation held at Bombay in December 1927 and presided over by Sir Tej Bahadur Saprú, decided to reject the Simon Commission.

The All India Muslim League which met in Calcutta in December 1927 passed a resolution supporting Hindu-Muslim unity and called for the boycott of the Simon Commission. Commenting on this Subhas Chandra Bose



*Reviewing parade of Congress volunteers with Motilal Nehru and
J.M. Sengupta at the time of Calcutta Congress, 1928*

wrote in 1934, "This decision was a triumph for the nationalist Moslems and it was possible only because such prominent Moslems as M.A. Jinnah and the Ali Brothers participated in the conference and advocated the Nationalist point of view."

The annual session of the Indian National Congress was held at Madras in December 1927. The Madras Congress issued a call to the entire Indian people to boycott the Simon Commission. It also took the initiative to convene an All-India All Parties Conference in order to draw up a constitution for free India, acceptable to all parties. In a sense, perhaps the most memorable event of the Madras Congress was that it passed almost unanimously a resolution declaring complete independence to be the goal of the Indian National Congress. Jawaharlal Nehru was the main driving force, together with a small band of Communists, behind this move. Gandhiji was absent at the session but the very next day he sharply criticised this move of the Congress and declared that the resolution had been "hastily conceived and thoughtlessly passed".

The arrival of the Simon Commission in India on 3 February 1928 and the Congress call for an India-wide hartal on that day met with widespread response. Subhas Chandra Bose had wanted the protest movement to be much wider and with a long range aim. In his own words, "The arrival of the Simon Seven in India in February 1928, was greeted with an All-India 'hartal' ...organised under the direction of the Congress Working Committee. Enthusiasm all over the country and particularly in Bengal was very great. The public expected a positive lead from the Congress leaders.... But no such directions came.... Only in Bengal, the Provincial Congress Committee on its own responsibility launched an intensive campaign for the boycott of British goods, the day the Commission landed in Bombay. There is absolutely no doubt that if the Congress Working Committee had taken courage in both hands, they could have anticipated the movement of 1930 by two years and the appointment of the Simon Commission could have been made the starting

point of such a movement."

In any case, Calcutta and Bengal on 3 February 1928 witnessed massive demonstrations, boycott of British goods and also clashes with the police. There is no doubt that Subhas was the driving force behind all this. It had India-wide reverberations and the whole country shook with the thunderous slogan of *Go Back Simon*. By the time the Commission returned to India for their second and more comprehensive visit in October 1928 Political India was in turmoil. The lethargy and inertia of the earlier years had disappeared.

The new striking feature of the anti-Simon upsurge was the tremendous militancy expressed by Indian youth and more so by the Indian working class. Workers had demonstrated in almost every city in large numbers and communists, socialists and other leftist elements were in the forefront of the working class movement. The youth of the country were also up in arms and everywhere they were in the forefront of the agitation against the Simon Commission. Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose were invited to scores of youth rallies. Subhas writes, "In May 1928, I was called upon to preside over the Maharashtra Provincial Conference at Poona. The enthusiasm I met with there ...was striking. I urged that the Congress should directly take up the task of organising labour and that youths and students should start organisations of their own for looking after their own interests and also for serving their country."

In the meantime the All Parties Conference had met in Lucknow in August 1928. A new development took place there. On the vexed problem of Hindu-Muslim unity, a fairly good stand had been taken by the All Parties Conference but it had also opted to adopt Dominion Status as the goal for all Indians. The emerging left wing was indignant and had a private meeting at Lucknow in the presence of both Jawaharlal and Subhas Chandra. This meeting decided to set up a new organisation called the India Independence League and Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra, Srinivas Iyenger and others became the leaders of this organisation.

The annual session of the Indian National Congress was scheduled to be held at Calcutta towards the end of December 1928. Before that left-minded students of Bengal organised a Provincial Students' Conference at Calcutta in September 1928, with Subhas Chandra Bose as the president. This Conference led to the formation of the All Bengal Students' Association (ABSA), a powerful mass-based student organisation. Throughout north India the militant youth were organised under the banner of Naujawan Bharat Sabha, under the leadership of the immortal young revolutionary Sardar Bhagat Singh. Both the communists and Subhas Chandra Bose had close links with this organisation. Jawaharlal had already declared that the ultimate goal of Indian independence movement should be socialism. Subhas held a similar point of view while the young Communist Party of India wanted free India to be a Socialist Republic.

However, the main controversy which rocked the Calcutta Congress was around the question as to what should be the goal of the Indian National Congress — Dominion Status or Complete Independence. Gandhiji and the oldguard including Motilal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr Rajendra Prasad and others were for Dominion Status while the younger rank and file of the Congress wanted nothing short of Complete Independence. Subhas became their chief spokesman. Gandhiji moved a resolution at the Calcutta Congress that Dominion Status should be the goal of the Indian National Congress. Subhas Bose, supported by Jawaharlal Nehru, moved an amendment to the effect that the two words Dominion Status should be deleted and Complete Independence be written in their place. Tempers rose over this issue and the amendment was lost by 973 votes to 1350. It was a close victory for Gandhiji but he tried to pacify the injured sentiments of Subhas and the Leftists by publicly assuring them that unless the Congress under his leadership could achieve Dominion Status in one year's time, Gandhiji himself would move the resolution supporting Complete Independence as the new goal. Dominion Status was not

achieved in a year's time. Gandhiji kept his word and the resolution on Complete Independence was indeed moved by him and adopted unanimously at the Lahore Congress in December 1929.

Another significant event during the Calcutta Congress was the march of many thousands of workers led by communists, socialists and left-wing Congressmen. They marched to the venue of the Congress session at Park Circus and tried to enter the Congress pandal to place the case of the working class before the Congress leadership. Subhas Chandra who was the G.O.C. of the Congress volunteers at first thought that the workers' demonstration had come to disrupt the Congress session and he tried to stop their entry to the Congress pandal. However, Motilal Nehru, the Congress President for that session, allowed the workers to enter the pandal for an hour. The official historian of the Indian National Congress, Pattabhi Sitaramayya records that the workers entered in a most disciplined manner, saluted the national flag and passed a resolution supporting the goal of complete independence. Motilal Nehru and other leaders addressed the workers' rally and assured them that the Congress would consider the workers' demand sympathetically.

This was a period of hectic activity for Subhas. We have already seen that as G.O.C. of Congress volunteers, he had to work almost round the clock to make smooth functioning of the Congress session possible. At the same time he became the Chairman of the Reception Committees of the All India Youth Congress meeting and of the Rashtra Bhasa Sammelan, both of which were held at the same time as the Congress session.

Welcoming the delegates coming to the All India Youth Congress on Christmas Day 1928, Subhas declared that the Sabarmati School (meaning Gandhiji) was trying to create an impression that modern industrialisation was bad while Aurobindo's Pondicherry School was trying to create the impression that there was nothing higher or nobler than peaceful contemplation. Sharply attacking both these points

of view, Subhas declared, "In India we want today a philosophy of activism.... We have to live in the present and to adapt ourselves to modern conditions. We can no longer live in an isolated corner of the world. When India is free, she will have to fight her modern enemies with modern efforts, both in the economic and in the political spheres." The Yough Congress finally adopted a resolution that its object was the attainment of Indian independence by 'all possible means' as opposed to the official Congress resolution which declared that its goal would be attained by 'all peaceful and legitimate means.'

At the session of the Rashtra Bhasa Sammelan, Subhas Chandra addressed the assembled delegates in Hindi. He supported the concept that Hindustani should be the national language for all Indians. He said, "I will not raise the question whether we should adopt the Hindi or the Urdu script for our national language. I agree with Mahatmaji that we must learn both the scripts."

Geraldine Forbes, an American research scholar, has pointed out that Subhas Chandra encouraged the organisation of women and it was under his direct inspiration that in 1928 Latika Ghosh set up the *Mahila Rashtriya Sangha* herself as the secretary. Radical-minded young girl students formed in the same year the *Chhattri Sangha* under the leadership of Kalyani Das. Subhas Chandra encouraged women to live a full life and devote themselves to the militant nationalist ideal. According to Forbes, "If there was a leading figure who encouraged their activities, it was Subhas Chandra Bose, considered by many women revolutionaries to be Bengal's greatest champion of women's rights."

Subhas Chandra also very soon healed the breach between him and the leaders of the working class movement caused by the misunderstanding at the Congress pandal. The Simon Commission this time visited Calcutta on 19 January 1929. Subhas, as President of the Bengal Congress, contacted all the leaders of the working class movement including the communists and planned a joint protest movement against the Simon Commission. On 19 January

1929, there was complete hartal and general strike in Calcutta, and in the one lakh strong "Go Back Simon" demonstration, nearly half were labourers. Subhas Chandra Bose was now truly the unchallenged leader of militant nationalists of Bengal and well on his way to becoming a national stalwart.

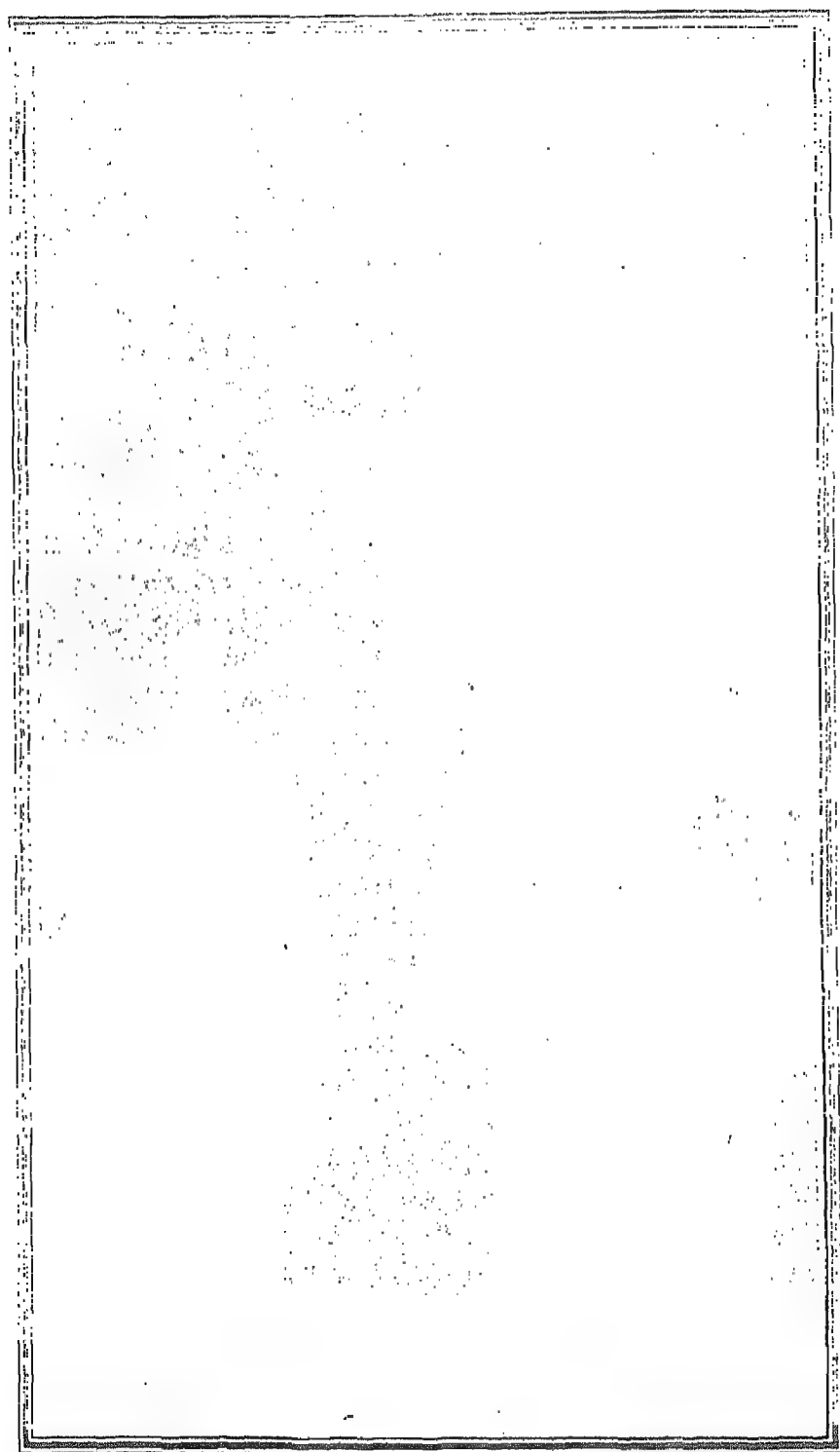
CHAPTER 6

CAMPAIGN FOR COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE

The British rulers realized that a storm was gathering in the political horizons of India. Two forces which they feared most at this stage were the militant working class movement led by the communists and the revolutionary youth movement, particularly in Bengal and Punjab. Gandhiji had got a year's time from the Calcutta Congress in 1928 for obtaining Dominion Status for India with his own methods. This had given the British rulers a temporary respite. However, the revolutionaries struck fast. At Lahore, late in 1928 Saunders, English Inspector of Police, was shot dead by revolutionaries belonging to the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army headed by Sardar Bhagat Singh. Saunders, together with Scott, was responsible for the brutal lathi-charge on the veteran nationalist leader Lajpat Rai at the time of the anti-Simon demonstration in Lahore. The killing of Saunders was an act of reprisal by the revolutionaries.

Another incident took place in Delhi in April 1929 when two young revolutionaries – Sardar Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt hurled a smoke-bomb inside the Central Legislative Assembly Hall in Delhi and distributed a leaflet declaring that an armed revolution against their rule was now on their agenda.

The British rulers made widespread arrests of suspected revolutionaries all over India and a Conspiracy Case was started in Lahore in July 1929. Bhagat Singh was the unquestioned leader of the revolutionary youth movement of



With Jawaharlal Nehru

north India and the organisation which he had founded – Naujawan Bharat Sabha – enjoyed widespread mass support. The fearless and defiant attitude adopted by Bhagat Singh and his comrades after their arrest and during their trial made a deep impression on the people.

The massive workers' march to the Congress pandal in 1928 and the large scale working class participation in anti-Simon demonstrations in Calcutta, Bombay, Kanpur and other working class centres made the rulers panicky. Irwin, the new Viceroy of India, in a speech in the Central Legislature at Delhi towards the end of January 1929, declared that the recent spread of communism in India had greatly alarmed his government. On 20 March 1929, in one swift move, the British rulers arrested 31 top-ranking trade union leaders from all over India. Some twenty of them were communists. They were all taken to Meerut Jail and a Conspiracy Case was launched in March 1929 itself. This was the historic Meerut Conspiracy Case. The British thought that they would be able to isolate the communists from the mainstream national movement but the opposite happened. Jawaharlal Nehru headed the All India Committee which was set up to defend the Meerut prisoners. In Bengal, Subhas Chandra Bose took a similar stand. Subhas and other left wing leaders of the national movement also publicly expressed sympathy for the revolutionary prisoners languishing in Lahore Jail.

In the meantime, prisoners of the Lahore Conspiracy Case led by Bhagat Singh made a demand before the government that they must not be given treatment at par with ordinary criminal prisoners. Rather they should be given the status of prisoners of war as they were fighting a revolutionary war against the British. When the government refused to concede their demands, they went on an indefinite hunger strike. One of the hunger strikers was a 24-year old young revolutionary from Bengal – Jatindra Nath Das. The government ultimately retreated but in the meantime Jatin Das died on the 63rd day of his hunger strike on 13 September 1929. Subhas rushed to Lahore to bring the mortal remains of Jatin Das to Calcutta by train. Thousands of people came to every major railway

station to pay their homage to Jatin Das. His body reached Calcutta on the evening of 15 September. Subhas kept a night-long vigil by the side of the coffin with a band of Congress volunteers and on 16 September, a massive funeral procession, the biggest in Calcutta since the death of C. R. Das, took place. Subhas, J.M. Sengupta and all other Congress leaders marched barefoot in the procession.

The death of Jatin Das had strongly re-forged the link between Punjab and Bengal and Subhas Chandra was invited to preside over the Punjab Provincial Students' Conference in October 1929. A huge students' procession paraded the streets of Lahore with Subhas in their midst and new slogans like, '*Inquilab Zindabad*' and '*Down with Imperialism*' were raised loudly. In a passionate speech to these students as the President of the Conference, Subhas said, "Tales of your heroes had been composed and sung by our great poets including Rabindranath Tagore... and we find your political pilgrims meeting ours not only in the jails of India but also in the jails of distant Burma and in far-off Andamans across the sea". Subhas told the students that they had glorious models before them like the martyr Jatin Das and the fearless hero Sardar Bhagat Singh.

In Bengal, unfortunately at this time the Congress was bitterly divided between those who supported Subhas Chandra Bose and those who supported J.M. Sengupta. Sengupta in 1929 was the Mayor of Calcutta Corporation and leader of the Swaraj Party in the Bengal Legislative Council. On the other hand Subhas was the President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee.

While the conflict inside the Bengal Congress was going on, Irwin, the new Viceroy, declared that the British Government was willing to concede Dominion Status to India provided the Indians could agree on their future constitution. Some outstanding Congress leaders met at Delhi and declared that they would be willing to join a Round Table Conference in order to draw up a Dominion Status constitution for India. A manifesto was issued to this effect and it was signed by Gandhiji, Motilal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and others.

Jawaharlal had at first refused to sign this manifesto but was willing to draft an alternative manifesto together with Subhas opposing the goal of Dominion Status and supporting the concept of Complete Independence.

Ultimately, however, Jawaharlal, possibly because of Gandhiji's persuasion, signed the manifesto issued by them. Subhas stuck to his guns and together with Dr Saifuddin Kitchlew of Punjab and Abdul Bari of Bihar issued an alternative manifesto opposing the acceptance of Dominion Status and refusing to participate in the so-called Round Table Conference. The radical youth of India supported the stand of Subhas.

On the eve of the Lahore session of the Indian National Congress in December 1929, Motilal Nehru, the outgoing President, gave a ruling barring the newly elected members of A.I.C.C. from Bengal from sitting in the A.I.C.C. meeting. Subhas Chandra Bose, who was a member of the Congress Working Committee sent a letter to Motilal Nehru tendering his resignation from the Congress Working Committee. Ultimately, however, Subhas withdrew his letter of resignation.

Jawaharlal Nehru presided over the Lahore Congress in December 1929 and this time Gandhiji himself moved the resolution on Complete Independence and it was passed unanimously amidst emotional scenes. Subhas wanted an additional phrase to be tagged on to Gandhiji's resolution to the effect that the Congress should launch a country-wide mass struggle and set up a parallel government in India to force the colonial rulers to concede their demand of Complete Independence.

The differences between the emerging leftist forces headed by Subhas Chandra Bose and the Congress High Command sharpened at Lahore. When at Lahore, in the concluding session of the Congress, the new Working Committee was being formed, Subhas Chandra Bose, together with his firm ally Srinivas Iyenger, were kept out of the Working Committee. Subhas was very bitter about this and some years later wrote, "There was a strong feeling in the All India Congress Committee that the names of Mr Iyenger and the writer should be retained."

But the Mahatma would not listen. He said openly that he wanted a committee that would be completely of one mind and he wanted his list to be passed in its entirety.... The Mahatma could henceforward proceed with his own plan without the fear of opposition within his own Cabinet...."

After coming back to Calcutta Subhas Chandra Bose was convicted in a case which had started in August 1929. He was given one year's rigorous imprisonment which the Calcutta High Court, later, reduced to nine months.

A few days before going to prison in one of his last speeches to Bengal Congressmen, Subhas declared, "The Irish nationalists not only passed a resolution setting forth independence as their goal but also declared complete independence After that the whole national outlook of Ireland underwent a complete change." Subhas did not directly refer to the famous Easter Rising which the Irish nationalists had organised in 1916 but the implication of his speech was clear. Gandhiji, who was preparing now to launch the famous Salt Satyagraha, had strong differences with Subhas. Yet he sent a moving message to Subhas congratulating him on his imprisonment, and adding that 'Bengal's bravery and self-sacrifice can never wane'. While Subhas was in prison, India was on the threshold of a stormy struggle for complete independence.

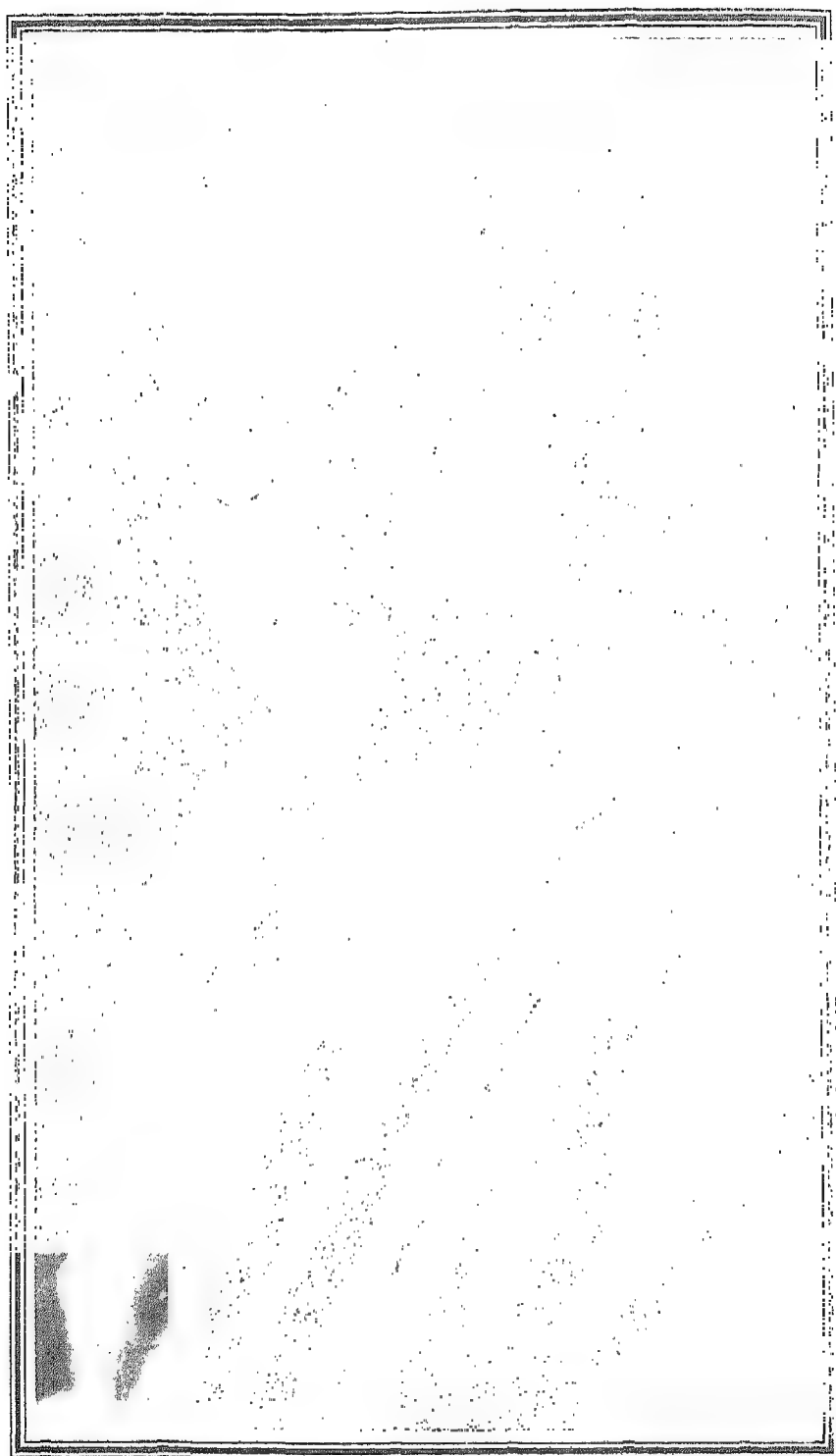
CHAPTER 7

THE STIRRING EVENTS OF 1930-31

1930 was a stormy year for India's struggle for freedom. Gandhiji was the supreme head of the impending national struggle and he was determined to keep it within the limits of non-violence. Early in January, 1930 Gandhiji despatched his first order that 26 January, 1930 should be observed all over India as the Day of Independence. On that day a Pledge prepared by Gandhiji and adopted by the Working Committee of the Congress was to be read from every platform – every school, college, office, village, market place, and open park in the towns. The assembled people repeated the pledge line by line and from 1930 onwards 26 January became a day dedicated to the liberation of motherland by vast masses of Indian people.

The Pledge of Independence, in part read as follows: "We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any government deprives the people of these rights and oppresses them the people have a further right to alter it or to abolish it. The British government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe therefore that India must sever the British connection and attain *Purna Swaraja* or complete independence".

As reports from various parts of India poured in, it was found that the Independence Day celebrations were a



Subhas Chandra Bose as Mayor of Calcutta

tremendous success. Unprecedented enthusiasm was exhibited in every nook and corner of India and people expected that a mass civil disobedience campaign would be launched by Gandhiji very soon. Gandhiji declared that the movement would be started by a small selected band of *Satyagrahis* under his leadership and that they would march from his Sabarmati Ashram and go up to Dandi in the coastal region of Gujarat. At the end of February, Gandhiji wrote, "This time on my arrest there is to be no mute passive non-violence, but non-violence of the most active type should be set in motion, so that not a single believer in non-violence as an article of faith, for the purpose of achieving India's goal should find himself free or alive at the end of the effort. While every effort imaginable and possible should be made to restrain the forces of violence, civil disobedience once begun this time cannot be stopped and must not be stopped, so long as there is a single civil resister left free or alive."

When Gandhiji and his select band of *Satyagrahis* reached the sea-coast, people all over India, men as well as women, rich and poor broke the salt law in hundreds of thousands. The British rulers and their police beat up the *Satyagrahis* with utmost brutality which shocked even the handful of British journalists who were covering the campaign. The left wing British Labour leader H.N. Brailsford who was then in India describes the savage brutality of the British rulers and the disciplined mass heroism of the civil resisters in eloquent terms in his book *Subject India*.

Subhas was then in jail but writing some four years later he was full of praise for Gandhiji and commented, "The... moves taken by him (Gandhi) will stand out for all time as some of the most brilliant achievements of his leadership and they reveal the height to which his statesmanship can ascend in times of crises." In Bengal, popular resistance to various oppressive laws of the Raj increased and these popular struggles often merged with the main Civil Disobedience Movement. One such struggle was the Carters' strike which took place in Calcutta from the 1st to the 7th of April, when the drivers of bullock and buffalo carts protested against a

sharp increase of their license fee by the provincial government. The leadership of the strike came from left nationalists and Communists like Swami Biswananda, Bankim Mukherjee and Abdul Momin. Some ten thousand carters, Hindus as well as Muslims, went on strike and barricaded the city streets. The Calcutta Police headed by the notorious commissioner Sir Charles Ugart opened fire on the carters killing seven of them. The reply of the carters was to organise a huge united demonstration where together with the demands of the carters, they lustily shouted national slogans like 'Hindu-Musliman ek ho' and 'Swadhin Bharat Ki Jai'. Abdul Momin, in his memoirs written in 1973, observes that this was the biggest united demonstration of Hindus and Muslims in Calcutta after the ugly communal riots of 1926. Graphic details of the carters' strike can be found in Tanika Sarkar's *Bengal 1928-34 Politics of Protest*.

Even more stirring events took place between 18 to 22 April 1930 in Chittagong in East Bengal. Surya Sen, better known as Masterda to the revolutionary youth of Bengal, had selected and trained about a hundred daring revolutionary youth, many of them only 15 or 16 years old (Tegra was only 13 years old) for an armed uprising in Chittagong, to overthrow the British rule there. The plan was kept totally secret and on 18 April the Chittagong revolutionaries, self-styled as the Indian Republican Army, seized the armoury, the telegraph and the telephone office as well as all other nerve centres of British rule in the city. Taken completely by surprise, the British rulers, including all Englishmen and women residing in Chittagong, fled from the city and took shelter in a British warship which was anchored at the port. The revolutionaries hoisted the national flag and elected Surya Sen as the President of the free Indian republic proclaiming Chittagong to be independent. All India was electrified and an illegal news-sheet came out in Calcutta to be distributed large scale among the youth with the Bengali heading *Dhanya Chattagram* (Glory to Chittagong). Subhas Chandra Bose and his fellow prisoners were elated and slogans congratulating the Chittagong heroes resounded in the prison yards. On 22 April, when the

Chittagong revolutionaries were fighting a desperate battle with ten times superior British military force in the hills of Jalalabad close to the city of Chittagong, the authorities of the Alipore Jail decided to teach the revolutionary prisoners detained there a lesson.

They started beating up the revolutionary prisoners with the butt ends of rifles. Subhas Chandra Bose and J.M. Sengupta who were in a nearby cell protested and started shouting *Bande Mataram*. The European Superintendent of the Jail ordered his armed force now to attack Bose and Sengupta as well. *The Calcutta Municipal Gazette* of 26 April 1930 gave a vivid description of the event: 'Immediately the whole force fell upon them using fisticuffs, *lathis* and batons. S. Sengupta was roughly handled and dragged to his cell. But the force used on S. Subhas Bose was much too brutal, he fell down the steps and became unconscious. Several prisoners carried him upstairs"

There were widespread protests against this. Sarat Bose, elder brother of Subhas, had gone to Chittagong to give legal defence to some of the arrested revolutionaries. *The Statesman* expressing the anger of European vested interests declared that they could scarcely make a difference between the activities of Gandhi, Sarat Bose and Chittagong revolutionaries. Gandhiji condemned the Chittagong uprising but also condemned the brutal repression by the British. Subhas on the other hand was full of praise for the martyrs of the battle at Jalalabad Hills.

An event of a completely different character, perhaps unique in the history of Indian freedom struggle, took place in Peshawar in the North-West Frontier Province of India. This was the land of the Pathans. They had joined the Civil Disobedience Movement in thousands under the leadership of the legendary Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, better known as the Frontier Gandhi. The British brought military forces in armoured cars and clashed with demonstrators at Peshwar on 23 April. They had brought Garhwali troops with them and asked them to open fire on the unarmed Pathans. Thakur Chandra Singh threw down his rifle and loudly declared that

from this day Indians will not fire upon Indians. The other Garhwali soldiers followed suit. The jubilant Pathan *Satyagrahis* embraced the Garhwali soldiers and slogans upholding Hindu-Mulsim unity rent the air. In wild panic, the British officers fled from Peshawar in their armoured cars. *The Statesman* wrote, "Peshawar lost" as if the British had been defeated in a military battle.

On 5 May 1930 Gandhiji was arrested and taken to prison. There were protest hartals and general strikes all over India. Sholapur, an industrial town, declared itself independent and the workers ran the administration for a few days. Later on British troops crushed this non-violent uprising with utmost brutality. However, repression failed to break the spirit of Indians and the Civil Disobedience Movement continued all over the country in a big way.

Meanwhile, Subhas Chandra Bose was elected Mayor of Calcutta on 22 August 1930. On 23 September 1930, he was released from prison and the very next day he took oath as the Mayor of Calcutta. During his inaugural speech as Mayor, Subhas expressed the view that in future he was likely to come into conflict with Jawaharlal Nehru as well as the Communists. He stated, "I would say that we have in this policy and programme a synthesis of what modern Europe calls Socialism and Fascism. We have here the justice, the equality, the love which is the basis of Socialism and combined with that we have the efficiency and discipline of Fascism as it stands in Europe today."

Gordon, the well known biographer of Subhas Chandra Bose and his brother Sarat records: "His mayoral speech... is the first positive mention of some features of fascism and the new synthesis which India might make of elements of socialism and fascism. Neglecting to mention any negative features, the new Indian synthesis became a familiar part of Bose's programme for India in the following years."

The daily newspaper *Liberty*, of which Sarat Bose was the Managing Director, hosted a large gathering where Subhas Bose as Mayor publicly welcomed H.N. Brailsford, British journalist and a leader of the British Labour Party.

Another small incident in this period deserves mention. The Scottish Church College, Calcutta, was observing its birth centenary on 12 December 1930 and Dr Urquhart, the liberal Principal of the College, invited Subhas Chandra Bose both as an ex-student and as the Mayor of Calcutta. In a speech introducing Subhas to the students, Dr Urquhart said that he was "one of the most famous students of the College."

On 8 December 1930, three daring young revolutionaries, Benoy Bose, Badal Gupta and Dinesh Gupta, entered the Writers' Building and shot dead Simpson, Inspector General of Prisons. Benoy Bose and Badal Gupta were killed in action while Dinesh was arrested, tried and hanged. At that time a Calcutta paper gave the following headline: *Dauntless Dinesh Dies at Dawn*. This correctly reflected the mood and temper of the period. The Calcutta Corporation held a meeting on 10 December and condemned the killing of Simpson as a 'dastardly outrage'. As Mayor, Subhas Bose was chairing the meeting. He made a remarkable speech in which he said, "It will not do simply to brand as misguided the youths who are responsible for these incidents. The fact stares us in the face that India today wants freedom very soon. The fact also stares us in the face that there are people in the country, whatever their number may be, who want freedom not merely by following the Congress programme but if need be they want freedom at any price and by any means".

Independence Day 1931 came with Subhas as Mayor leading a huge procession of Congress volunteers towards the Calcutta Maidan to hoist the national flag there. The British authorities were determined to prevent this and made a brutal attack on all the volunteers including Subhas. His old friend, Khitish Prasad Chattopadhyay, then Education Officer of the Calcutta Corporation, and himself a participant in the procession graphically described what followed in a statement to the *Calcutta Municipal Gazette*: "I was with the Mayor all the time, on his left, until I was struck down. As we crossed Chowringhee, a body of mounted policemen charged into us scattering the people in our rear and isolating the Mayor and a few of us from the main body of the processionists. The

mounted men then rode at us, especially the Mayor, hitting us with the short *lathis* in their hand. The Mayor was attacked on both sides and I noted him protecting his head with his upraised right arm, as best as he could. I shouted out to his assailants: "You have no right to beat Subhas Bose. You can arrest him. But you have no right to beat him." I then tried to protect the Mayor's head by holding the pole of the banner in my hand over him... at this one of the mounted men rode at me and struck twice.... As I was then blinded by the blood that poured down my face I was thrown down by the impact of the horse None of the men who were beating the Mayor and myself were Indians" .

Subhas Bose was then arrested and taken to Lal bazar where he was kept in the police lock-up for 24 hours and was given no food or medical treatment. He was badly bruised, suffering injury over the right side of his forehead and the back of his head, his clothes were splattered with his own blood. The next day he was put up before Roxburgh, the Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta, wearing blood-stained torn clothes and with his right arm in a sling. As a *Satyagrahi*, he refused to defend himself and was promptly sentenced to six months rigorous imprisonment.

The Civil Disobedience Movement in Bengal and the rest of India went on unabated and the British Government was now genuinely alarmed. Almost equally alarmed were the Indian big businessmen and they put pressure on Gandhiji for a negotiated settlement with the British. Early in February 1931, the British Indian Government unconditionally released Gandhiji and other members of the Congress Working Committee so that they could meet the Viceroy Lord Irwin and agree to attend the Round Table Conference (R.T.C.) called by the British Prime Minister. On 17 February, Gandhiji's meetings with Lord Irwin began. Almost all the members of the Working Committee, except Motilal Nehru who was extremely ill, accompanied Gandhiji. Discussions between the Viceroy and the Congress leaders went on for several days and on 4 March Gandhiji placed the draft of a pact, which has come to be known as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, before the

Working Committee for its approval. After discussion, the entire Working Committee, including Jawaharlal Nehru, approved the Pact and on 5 March Gandhiji and Lord Irwin put their signatures to the Pact.

What were the terms of the Pact? The Congress, in Subhas's view, agreed: (a) to suspend the Civil Disobedience Movement, (b) to participate in the deliberations of the forthcoming Round Table Conference for drafting a constitution for India on the basis of (i) Federation, (ii) Responsibility and (iii) Adjustments and safeguards that may be necessary in the interests of India, and (c) to forge the demand for an investigation into the allegation of police atrocities in different parts of India.

The Viceroy, on behalf of the Government, agreed (a) to release simultaneously all political prisoners incarcerated in connection with the non-violent movement, (b) to restore confiscated property and land to the owners where it had not been already sold or auctioned by the government, (c) to withdraw the emergency ordinances, (d) to permit people who live within a certain distance of the sea-shore to collect or manufacture salt free of duty, (e) to permit peaceful picketing of liquor, opium and foreign-cloth shops, the last item designed not as a discrimination against British goods but as an encouragement to the Swadeshi Movement.

A large number of rank and file Congressmen including the leftists were sharply critical of the agreement. Motilal Nehru had passed away on 6 February 1931 and Jawaharlal was still mourning him on 4 March. He had initially supported the Pact in the meeting of the Working Committee but after the publication of the Pact he was sharply critical. He was reported to have stated: "Was it for this that our people had behaved so gallantly for a year? Were all our brave words and deeds to end in this...the Independence Resolution of the Congress, the Pledge of January 26, often repeated?"

Subhas Chandra Bose who heard and read about the Pact while still in prison, was harshly critical of it. He was also disappointed with the role of Jawaharlal and later on wrote: "At this juncture, the responsibility of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

was very great. Besides being the President of the Congress, he was the only member of the Working Committee who could be expected to understand and advocate the Left-Wing point of view and his refusal would have been sufficient to prevent the final acceptance of the Pact by the Mahatma and the Working Committee.... (He) came out with a statement that he did not approve of some of the terms of the Pact but as an obedient soldier he had to submit to the leader. But the country had regarded him as something more than an obedient soldier."

Subhas Chandra Bose was released from prison and he rushed to Bombay to meet Gandhiji. He told Gandhiji that he agreed with Jawaharlal that under the terms of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact the Congress had received little in return for all the suffering that the Congress workers had undergone during the past year. Subhas had elaborate talks with Gandhiji from March 15 to 17 but he could not persuade Gandhiji to agree with him. The biggest point of difference between Gandhi and Subhas was the question of the release of all political prisoners. To Subhas some 800 political prisoners of Bengal were not released by the terms of the Pact, although many of them had been detained without trial. However to Gandhiji these prisoners were not in the same category as the Congress *Satagrahis* pledged to non-violence.

A special meeting of the Indian National Congress was called at Karachi towards the end of March 1931. A few days before the Karachi Congress was to start, three daring young revolutionaries – Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev had been hanged in the Lahore Jail. The radical minded youth of India to whom Bhagat Singh was a veritable hero, now denounced the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and blamed Gandhiji for not making more effective representations to the Viceroy for saving the lives of these three young heroes. So great was their anger that when Gandhiji arrived at the Karachi station for the Congress session, thousands of radical minded young men and women greeted Gandhiji with bouquets of black roses and shouted a new slogan that by the Pact 'what have the youth obtained? Only the execution of Bhagat Singh!'.

The All India Naujawan Bharat Sabha, a youth organisation founded by Bhagat Singh held its annual conference at Karachi close to the Congress session on 27 March, 1931. Presiding over its conference, Subhas Chandra Bose declared: "Bhagat Singh was a symbol of the spirit of revolt which had taken possession of the country from one end to other. That spirit is unconquerable...these recent executions are to me sure indications that there has been no change of heart on the side of the government and the time for a honourable settlement has not arrived yet." Subhas went on to strongly criticise the Gandhi-Irwin Pact from this platform but since Indian patriots were in the midst of a struggle, they should not reject the Pact, which would amount to denouncing their commander – Gandhiji.

In the Karachi Congress itself, in the meeting of the Subjects Committee Subhas had spoken sharply against the Pact. But ultimately he, with most of his supporters, voted for the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Only the handful of communists and revolutionaries present at Karachi as delegates voted against the Pact. They were bitterly critical of the ultimate stand taken by Subhas Chandra Bose and practically told him that he had let down the left. An unhappy Subhas later on wrote in defence of his performance at the Karachi Congress: "... We decided that a statement should be made to the effect that the Left-Wing of the Congress did not approve of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, but in view of the circumstances prevailing at that time, they would refrain from dividing the House. The statement was made by me before the Subjects Committee of the Congress and was received with great jubilation by the supporters of the Pact while it caused disappointment to our more enthusiastic supporters." Looking back, we cannot but comment that if Subhas considered his stand at the Karachi Congress justified, keeping in mind the great importance of unity of the congress, how could we then criticise Jawaharlal for taking a more or less similar stand?

Subhas himself had realized that his stand could not be strongly defended. Therefore, he gives a further defence of his action. When he had met Gandhiji at Bombay on 15 March,

1931 and had discussion with him for three days, the Mahatma had given him three verbal assurances:

- (i) He would ask the Karachi Congress for a mandate to bind the hands of the congress deputation to the Round Table Conference.
- (ii) That mandate would contain nothing that was not consistent with the status of independence for which the Lahore Congress had declared.
- (iii) He would use all his influence and strain every nerve to secure amnesty for those who had been left out in the Pact."

Subhas further wrote that at the Karachi Congress, the mandate given to the Congress delegation was in keeping with the assurance given by the Mahatma to the writer in Bombay. Subhas later on indirectly criticised his own stand at Karachi. He wrote: "The Delhi Pact, as we shall see later on, proved to be not a blessing but a curse. The time was not opportune for an understanding of the sort attempted. The struggle should have been continued for some time longer."

As is well known the Round Table Conference was a failure. Gandhiji returned empty-handed from England to Bombay on 28 December 1931. In the meantime three savage acts of repression had taken place in Bengal between June and October 1931. At Chittagong, an oppressive Indian police officer was killed by a young revolutionary in June 1931. The next morning the local government officials incited anti-social gangsters to loot Chittagong in broad daylight. The police remained inactive in order to teach the people of Chittagong a lesson.

In the middle of September 1931, the jail authorities at the Hijli Detention Camp near Kharagpur in Bengal resorted to unprovoked firing on the political prisoners when they were taking their food. Two revolutionary prisoners – Santosh Mitra and Tarakeshwar Sen were killed on the spot and many more were seriously injured. Subhas rushed to Hijli and brought back the bodies of the martyrs to Calcutta. The poet Rabindranth Tagore was seventy years old and ailing. Still at the request of Subhas and J.M. Sengupta, he came to the

Calcutta Monument Maidan and before a huge gathering denounced the government atrocities.

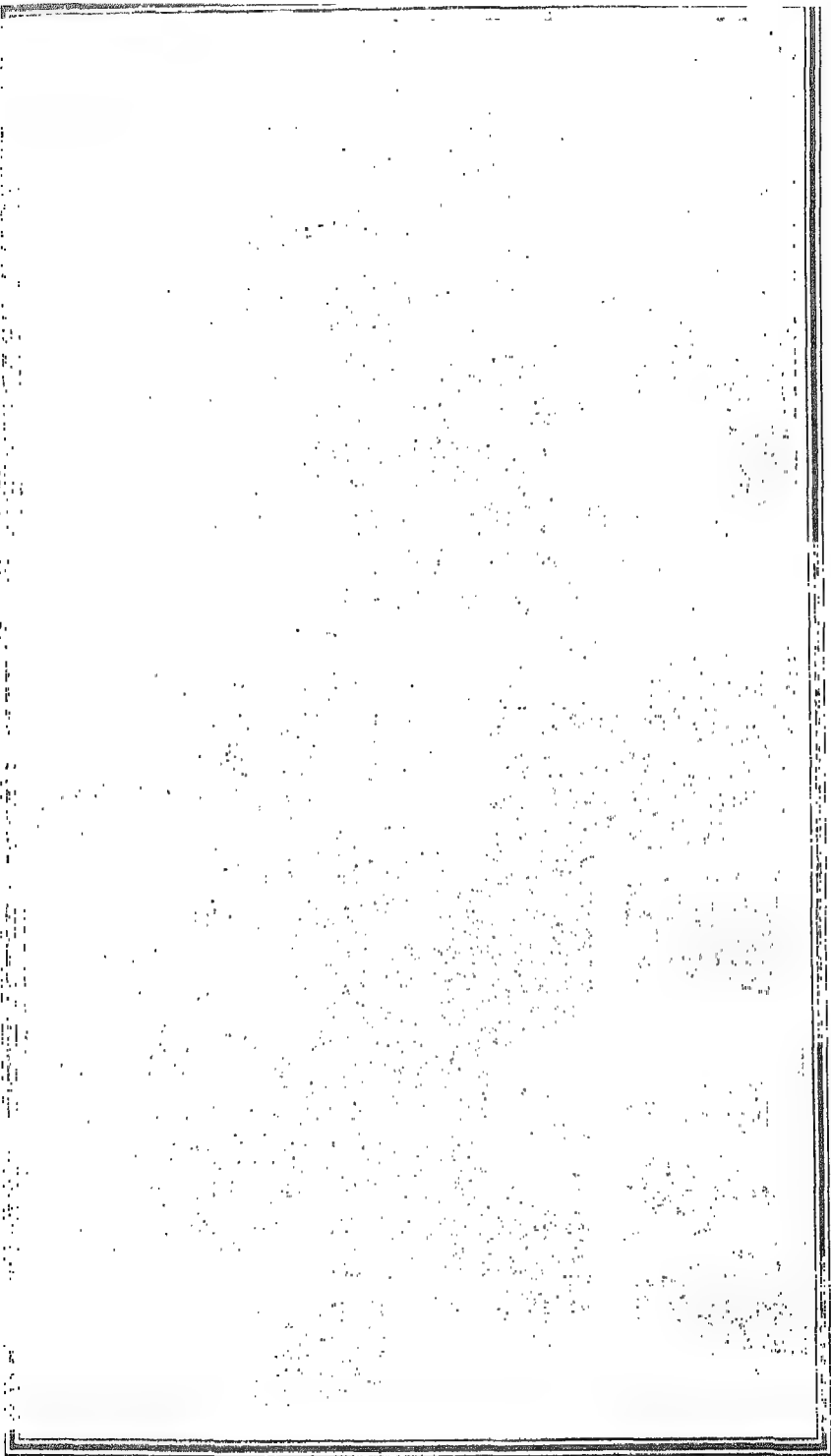
On 4 January 1932, the Viceroy announced that the period of truce under the Pact was over. Sweeping arrests were made of nearly twenty thousand Congress workers and leaders all over India. The arrested included Gandhiji, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr Rajendra Prasad and others. Subhas was then in Bombay carrying on discussions with Gandhiji and on 2 January 1932 he had left for Calcutta by train. He was arrested at Kalyan only 30 miles from Bombay under Regulation III of 1818. He was taken by the same train to an unknown destination. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact which had started period of hope for the Indian people with a bang, now ended with a whimper. A second mass Civil Disobedience struggle now began.

CHAPTER 8

SUBHAS BOSE IN EUROPE

Subhas Chandra Bose, after his arrest in January 1932, was taken to Seoni Jail. Seoni was the nearest jail to Kalyan where he had been arrested and taken off the train. Seoni was a sub-jail with no electricity and few amenities and very soon Subhas Bose fell ill. By the middle of April 1932 the health of Subhas Chandra had deteriorated very much and the superintendent of Seoni jail wrote to the Bombay Government that Subhas should be transferred to some other jail where he could get proper medical treatment. Calcutta should have been the proper place for him but the government of Bengal refused to allow Subhas to be jailed inside Bengal. Sarat Bose, his elder brother, had also joined him in the same jail and he was gravely worried about Subhas' health. Subhas had digestive problems and recurring pain around the waist. Local doctors suspected that he had gallbladder trouble and tuberculosis. At the end of May, both Subhas and Sarat were transferred to Jabalpur Military Hospital for a more thorough medical treatment. The doctors there suggested that Subhas needed more specialised treatment and he was taken to Madras where he was examined both by official physicians and doctors of his own choice — Dr B.C. Roy and Sir Nilratan Sircar. They agreed that there were signs of tuberculosis and on their recommendation Subhas was shifted to the Bhowali sanatorium near Nainital and Ranikhet in the Kumaon Hills. It was hoped that his health would improve there.

Bhowali did little good to Subhas and the Government of India did not want him to die in prison, as that would have



With Vithalbhai Patel in Europe

led to explosive consequences in India. At the same time, they were not willing to release him because the British rulers suspected that Subhas was a revolutionary, with strong links with the revolutionary Jugantar party. So they made an offer to Subhas Chandra Bose. They would allow him to go to Europe straight from Bombay and not to come to Calcutta even for a day to bid farewell to his ailing parents. The government also stipulated that once he boarded the ship at Bombay, he would have to pay for his entire expenses for his trip to Europe and for his stay there.

As we have already noted, Subhas had declined a similar offer from the government in 1927 when he was ailing in Mandalay prison. However, in 1932 he felt that his physical ailments could be cured only if he went to Europe as a free person. Sarat Bose's wife Mrs Bina Bose came and met him in prison and also met high government officials in Delhi to work out the details. It was decided that he would sail by S.S. Ganges on 23 February 1933 from Bombay. A few friends and relatives came to bid him goodbye but the police surrounded him till he boarded the ship, still a prisoner. The release order was handed over to Subhas Chandra Bose only when the ship had left the harbour.

The ship fortunately was an Italian liner and they treated Subhas with a great deal of warmth. At Venice, many pressmen came to interview him and this made him happy. From there he went straight to Vienna where he settled down in Dr Fuerth's sanatorium. His room soon became a centre for Indian students to drop in and visitors from India also came off and on. However, Subhas was not satisfied with his treatment by Dr Fuerth and wanted to go to Germany and England for better medical facilities. The Government of India had anticipated such a move and they granted him passport facilities on 8 May 1933 to Germany but did not encourage him to visit England.

A very senior Swarajist leader, friend of late C.R. Das and a great admirer of Subhas, Vithalbhaji Patel (elder brother of Vallabhbhai Patel) was then in Europe also for treatment. He very often met Subhas both at Vienna and in Switzerland.

In May 1933 Subhas Bose and Vithalbhai Patel issued a joint statement from Vienna which came to be known as the Bose-Patel Manifesto. The Manifesto, in part, declared: "We are clearly of the opinion that as a political leader Mahatma Gandhi has failed. The time has therefore come for a radical reorganisation of the Congress on a new principle and with a new method. If the Congress as a whole can undergo this transformation, it would be the best course. Failing that, a new party will have to be formed within the Congress composed of all radical elements. Non-cooperation cannot be given up but the form of Non-cooperation will have to be changed into a more militant one and the fight for freedom to be waged on all fronts."

The elder Patel was greatly impressed with Subhas Chandra Bose and was full of praise for him. In the second half of 1933 Patel became very seriously ill and shifted to Switzerland. Subhas also went there partly hoping to improve his own health and also to nurse Vithalbhai Patel. Subhas was with Patel when he passed away in late October 1933.

Before Patel's illness Subhas had made a two-month long trip to Czechoslovakia, Poland and Germany. Even before that he was invited to London to address the Third Indian Political Conference to be held there on 10 June, 1933. Subhas sent his written address to London but did not go there because he believed that he might be arrested there. In this address Subhas declared that a new party should be formed in India. "Let this party be called the **Samyavadi-Sangha**. It will be a centralized and well disciplined All-India Party-working amongst every section of the community.... The **Samyavadi-Sangha** will stand for all-round freedom for the Indian people - that is, for social, economic and political freedom."

Jawaharlal Nehru who had stated early in 1935 that the world was becoming sharply divided into the fascist and the communist camp and although he was critical of the communists because of their dogmatic sectarianism, if he had to choose between the two, his choice would be in favour of communism. Subhas sharply disagreed with this and in a

statement issued from Geneva in February 1935, he stated, "It would be a fatal error that the choice for India lies between Communism and Fascism ... My own view is to work out a synthesis of all that is useful and good in the different movements that we see today We would be guilty of folly if we would ignore any movement or experiment because of any pre-conceived bias." . It will be noted that Subhas Chandra had expressed a similar view in late 1930, in his inaugural address as the Mayor of Calcutta Corporation.

However, in fairness to Subhas we have to state that he somewhat changed his view by early 1938. On 24 January 1938, R.P. Dutt, the noted communist leader of Great Britain published in the *Daily Worker*, London, report of an interview with Subhas Chandra Bose. Dutt asked Subhas that he had made certain comments on fascism in the closing part of his book *The Indian Struggle*. But would he like to make any comment on his view of fascism now?

In an elaborate reply Subhas said, "My political ideas have developed further since I wrote my book three years ago. What I really meant was that we in India wanted our national freedom, and having won it, we wanted to move in the direction of Socialism. This is what I meant when I referred to 'a synthesis between Communism and Fascism.' Perhaps the expression I used was not a happy one. But I should like to point out that when I was writing the book, Fascism had not started on its imperialist expedition...."

In his trip from Vienna to Prague, Subhas met Dr Benes who was then the Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia. He contributed to the formation of an Indo-Czech association which was formed in 1934 mainly by Professor Lesny, the noted Indologist who had been at Rabindranath Tagore's Santiniketan.

Early in 1934, Subhas visited Italy and was able to meet Benito Mussolini, the Fascist dictator of Italy. He was quite impressed with Mussolini's achievements and is reported to have told his German friend Lothar Frank (who was supposed to be a Left-Wing member of the Nazi Party) that his interview with Mussolini was quite interesting. Sisir K. Bose and

Alexander Worth in their book *A Beacon Across Asia* have given an account of this interview. "Mussolini asked Subhas during this conversation. 'Do you really and firmly believe that India will be free soon?' When Bose said yes, Mussolini asked him again, 'Are you for reformist or revolutionary methods for achieving Indian independence?' Bose said in reply that he preferred revolutionary to reformist methods. Mussolini said, "Then indeed you have a chance." Subhas was to make many more trips to Italy and received strong support from Mussolini, whom he believed to be among those in world politics who really counted.

Subhas Chandra, during his stay in Europe, time and again referred to the efficiency of the Fascist state in transforming a demoralised society into a dynamic one but nowhere is there any criticism of the negative features of Fascism. In fact, Subhas hurried to Rome to personally present to Mussolini in early 1935 his just published book *The Indian Struggle: 1920-34*. Despite our great admiration for the total contribution of Subhas Chandra Bose to India's freedom struggle, it is difficult for us to accept his version of socialism. Notwithstanding his interview with R.P. Dutt in early 1938, as late as 1944 in a speech given at the Tokyo University, Subhas said again "Our political Philosophy should be a synthesis between National Socialism and Communism. The conflict between thesis and antithesis has to be resolved in a higher synthesis... therefore we must have a state of an authoritarian character".

Early in 1934, the Congress Working Committee, on the advice of Gandhiji unconditionally called off the Civil Disobedience Movement. Jawaharlal Nehru was in jail then as were many other Congressmen. In public statements and in autobiographical reminiscences, Nehru expressed great unhappiness at this decision. The emerging Leftist forces of India expected Nehru to make a sharp break with Gandhiji but this did not happen. Subhas Chandra Bose was greatly disappointed with Nehru's performance and in a very critical comment, he wrote, "With a popularity only second to that of Mahatma, with unbounded prestige among his

countrymen, with a clear brain possessing the finest ideas, with an up-to-date knoweldge of modern world movements — that he should be found wanting in the essential quality of leadership, namely the capacity to make decisions and face unpopularity if need be, was a great disappointment."

The international views of Subhas Chandra Bose at this stage were rather complex. We have seen that he had expressed great admiration for the achievements of Fascist Italy under Mussolini. Yet, when in 1935 Italy attacked Abyssinia and backed by the policy of appeasement adopted by Britain and France, was shamelessly annexing that helpless African country, Subhas Chandra condemed Italy in an article called, 'The Secret of Abyssinia and Its Lesson' publisehd in November 1935 in the well-known Calcutta monthly journal *Modern Review*. Subhas Chandra commented towards the end of the article that "Abyssinia will go down fighting but she will stir the conscience of the world ... Throughout the world of coloured races there will be a new consciousness. The consciousness will herald the dawn of a new life among the suppressed nations. All imperalistis are feeling uneasy about this. ..."

The British Government gave certain freedom to Subhas to travel throughout Europe and when he applied for a visa to go to the Soviet Union, it did not formally object. However, the Soviet Government refused to give him the necessary visa.

In early 1936, Subhas visited Berlin. At this time Hitler had made a speech which contained some strong anti-Indian remarks. Subash was furious and wanted a strong reaction from Indian Students' Federation in Europe. Some of the Indian student leaders in Europe agreed with him while others wanted to keep a low profile as they did not want to antagonise Hitler. Subhas strongly differed with the latter and wrote to Amiya Chakravarty on 11 March 1936 that against Nazi Germany, "We have many accusations from India's standpoint".

Later in the same year, Subhas decided to go to Ireland where the government of de Valera had invited him to come. He went by ship from France to the Port of Cork in Ireland.

Arriving in Ireland, he went to pay his homage at the grave of Terrence MacSwinney, an Irish patriot who had died during a protracted hungerstrike in a British prison. Bose recalled that when young Jatin Das had similarly laid down his life at Lahore Jail in September 1929, the widow of MacSwinney had sent a solidarity telegram to the parents of Jatin. Subhas Chandra was given a warm public reception at Dublin when an Irish nationalist, in his speech, showering praise on Subhas Chandra, expressed the hope that some day in future Dublin should have a Mayor like Subhas Chandra of Calcutta, who could stand up so bravely against the British Raj.

During this period, Subhas's views about fascism and socialism were undergoing a change. In a speech to the French Section of the League against Imperailism, Subhas declared, "Our movement aims not only at national liberation, but also at social freedom.... The feeling is growing that the Indian National Congress should declare itself more explicitly on the side of the masses ... we are moving in the direction of socialism."

Thus, our brief resume of Subhas's stay in Europe clearly reveals that he was very active and was continually advocating the cause of Indian independence in various quarters of Europe. Nonetheless, Subhas felt somewhat stifled in Europe and wanted to return to India. Early in 1936, he made up his mind to return to India, whatever the consequences. In a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas wrote on 13 March 1936 that the Government of India had made it clear to him that if he returned to India, he cannot expect to remain at liberty. Jawaharlal in his reply wrote that he was against Subhas's immediate return to India but also agreed that "You cannot submit to indefinite exile".

Nonetheless, Subhas decided to take the plunge. In a letter to Romain Rolland whom he had met twice during his stay in Europe, he wrote, "I feel that it is my duty to return to India at once, regardless, of the official frowns."

Subhas sailed for India from Italy on 22 March 1936. He had been in Europe for only three years and he now wanted

to use the experiences that he had gathered in a far more active struggle for Indian freedom on Indian soil. The ship carrying Subhas docked in Bombay on 8 April 1936 and he was immediately arrested by the British. He was first kept detained in Bombay but later on was taken to Yeravada prison near Poona. There was great public outcry against the re-arrest of Subhas Chandra, not only in Bengal but also elsewhere. So, the government agreed to shift him to Kurseong, a hill station in Bengal where Sarat Bose had a house. He was not yet completely well and needed hospital treatment. So on 17 December 1936 he was transferred to Calcutta Medical College Hospital. The demand for Subhas's release became more insistent and on 17 March 1937, Subhas was released unconditionally in Calcutta.

The election to the Bengal Legislative Assembly under the new Act of 1935 had taken place in January 1937 and a popular Ministry had to be formed now. The Congress had participated in this election throughout India but the left forces were opposed to the Congress forming a government. At the Lucknow Congress in 1936, the communists, Congress socialists and the followers of M.N. Roy had strongly opposed Congress accepting office. Jawaharlal Nehru was also of a similar point of view. Subhas who could not be present in the Congress for obvious reasons, also strongly expressed his view against acceptance of office by the Congress. The Congress had won sweeping victories in a number of provinces including Bombay, Madras, U.P., and Bihar and the Congress leadership was now keen to form ministries in those provinces. In Bengal the Congress could come to power only by entering into a coalition with the Krishak Praja Party led by A.K. Fazlul Huq. It was a very complicated situation in Bengal and in India as a whole. This was the situation when Subhas Chandra Bose was released from detention in March 1937.

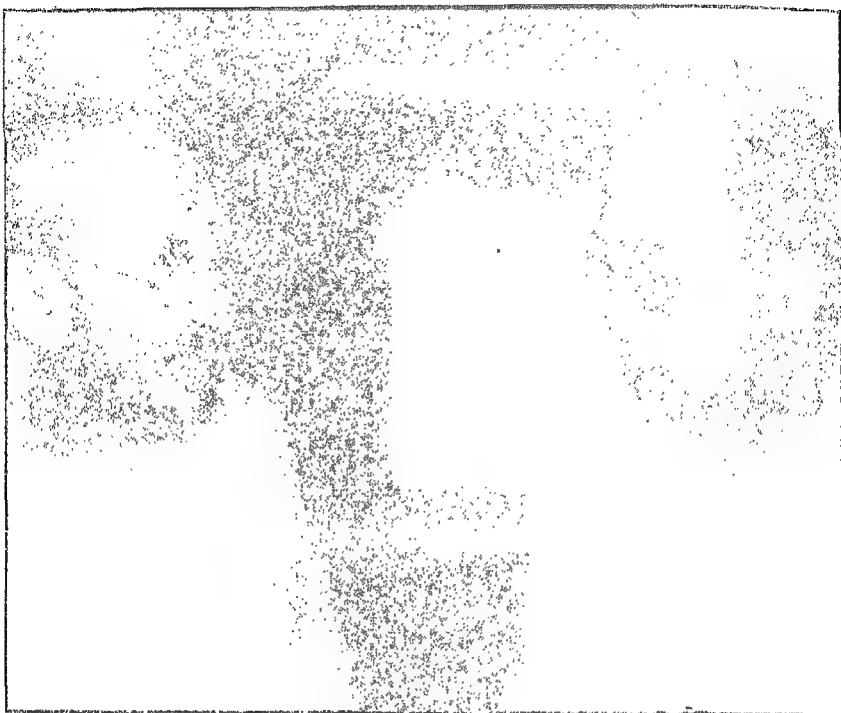
CHAPTER 9

UNDERSTANDING OF WORLD DEVELOPMENTS

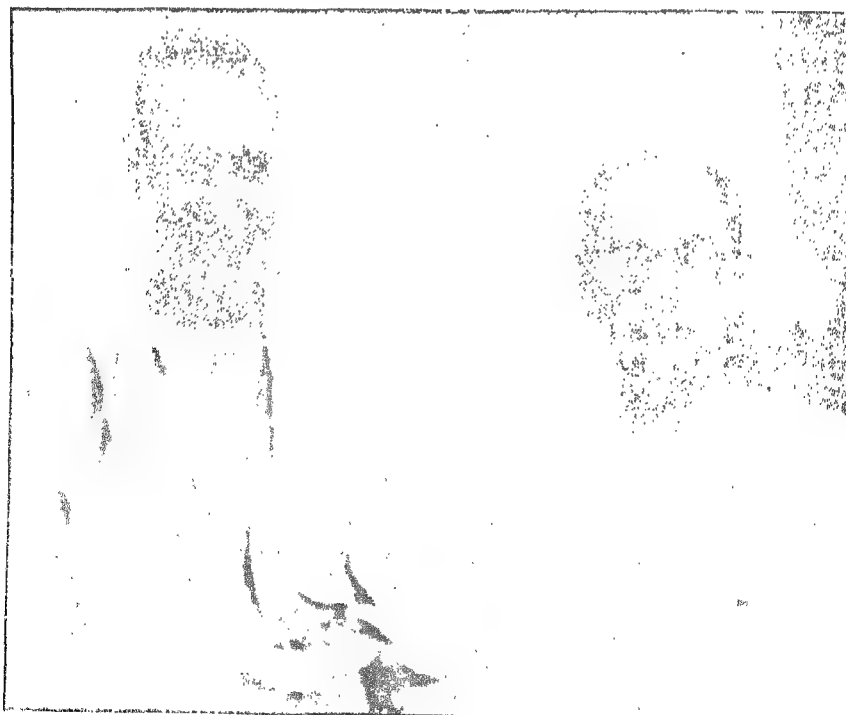
After his release in early 1937, Subhas was still not well enough to start the life of hectic activities that awaited him. So he took a very correct decision to go to Dalhousie, a hill station now in Himachal Pradesh, to stay with his old friends, the Dharmaveer family. He rested there for nearly six months, keeping in touch with politics through newspapers and journals, read many books and rested. He also kept contact with many friends through letters. In one such letter to a friend, he wrote, "The greatest joy I have experienced so far is in living a life of uncertainty and adventure – and a life devoted to a cause. It compensates you for all your suffering and sorrow and it makes life romantic".

He was not yet very clear about the path that he would follow and was feeling restless. In another letter in 1937 from Dalhousie to his old friend, Subhas wrote, "I must go on. The path is long and dreary. At times I feel weary. Darkness overtakes me – relieved by occasional flashes of lightning. But what of that? There is pleasure in travelling It is not the bright future alone that calls, but the gloomy uncertainty as well but if I should fall before I reach the light — what of that ?"

This was the period when Japanese fascism had shown its ugly imperialist face by her naked aggression against China. The entire Indian National Movement headed by Jawaharlal Nehru had expressed itself very strongly on the



With Gandhiji, 1937



With Abdul Ghaffar Khan, 1937

side of China against Japan. Acting as the conscience of India, the poet Rabindranath Tagore had denounced Japan in no uncertain terms: "They are piercing the heart of China with powerful weapons and they are piercing the heart of Buddha in mock salutation." Subhas, however, was not so outspoken in his denunciation of Japan. He concluded an article written in the *Modern Review*, a well-known monthly journal, entitled 'Japan's role in the Far East', with these words: "Japan had done great things for herself and for Asia She is determined to drive out the Western powers. ... But could not all these have been achieved without imperialism, without dismembering the Chinese Republic, without humiliating another proud, cultured, and ancient race? No, with all our admiration for Japan, our whole heart goes to China in her hour of trial."

Subhash came back to Calcutta early in October 1937. Jawaharlal, who was then President of the Indian National Congress, was disturbed by the continued factionalism in the Bengal Congress and he hoped that Subhas would be able to put an end to all this. Jawaharlal was also gravely concerned with the persistent Muslim objection to the song *Bande Mataram* which they said was too strongly Hindu in its overtones and unacceptable to the Muslims. He sought the advice of Subhas as to what should be done. Subhas told Nehru that they should seek the opinion of Rabindranath Tagore. The poet had himself given music to Bankim's *Bande Mataram* but he agreed that Muslims could very well object to it. Bengali nationalist opinion was very strongly in favour of retaining the song as our national anthem. Subhas, however, was not so dogmatic and realized the importance of not hurting the sensitivity of the Muslims. Ultimately, there was a compromise solution—the song *Jana-gana-mana-adhinayak*, composed by Tagore became our national anthem while only the first stanza of *Bande Mataram* continued to be sung on all suitable occasions on the Congress platform.

On 27 October there was a ten thousand strong peasants' rally in Calcutta presided over by Professor N.G. Ranga, President of the All-India Kisan Sabha which had been

founded in 1936. Subhas was requested to address the rally. He told them that the Congress was fighting for an independent India where all classes of Indians could prosper. But the Congress also wanted all exploitation to end. However, Subhas did not explain in this speech how exploitation of peasants could be ended without adversely affecting the interests of the Zamindars and other rural vested interests.

Subhas, in this period, also lent strong support to the political prisoners' release movement launched by the Bengal Provincial Students' Federation. The All India Congress Committee also met in Calcutta in which Subhas took an active part. He was also elected an alderman to the Calcutta Corporation. The Corporation Employees Association gave him a warm reception and in reply Subhas passionately pleaded for Hindu-Muslim unity.

Very soon, such hectic activities proved too much for his health. On urgent medical advice, Subhas left by plane for Europe on 18 November 1937. This time he stayed in Europe for less than three months but these three months were very eventful for him both politically and personally. He stayed in a mountain resort called Badgastein in Austria where his health quickly improved. He started writing what was to be his unfinished autobiography called *An Indian Pilgrim*. An Austrian lady Emilie Schenkl — she and Subhas Chandra had known each other since 1934 and had become close friends — came to this mountain resort at the request of Subhas. Emilie told Gordon, the well-known biographer of Subhas at Vienna on 14 October 1978 that she and Subhas were secretly married at Badgastein in December 1937. There is some controversy about the year of marriage. Krishna Bose, niece-in-law of Subhas, has suggested that Subhas and Emilie were married in 1941. Yet other biographers have written that they were married as late as 1942. We have definite evidence that their child Anita was born on 29 November 1942 in Vienna. There is also very clear evidence that Subhas and Emilie lived together in Berlin from 1941 to 1943. Subhas also wrote a letter to his elder brother Sarat

(which became known many years later) that Emilie was his wife, Anita his daughter. The important thing is not the actual date but the fact that Subhas loved Emilie, that they were married and that they had a daughter. A nephew of Subhas, Dr Sisir Bose, who has done more than any one else to gather together enormous material for historical research on the life and work of Subhas reportedly told Gordon that the relationship with Emilie made Subhas Bose a more complete human being".

During his long stay in Europe, Subhas Chandra had never visited Britain but this time he decided to go there – his first visit after 1921. He reached London in January 1938. The *Calcutta Municipal Gazette* gave a vivid description. "He was accorded a reception at the Victoria Station by several Indians representing the Friends of India, the Swaraj League, the Indian Political Group, the Gandhi Society, the Indian Progressive Writers' Association, the Indian Colonial Seamen's Association, the Indian Journalists' Association Abroad, the Oxford, Cambridge and London Majlis and the Federation of Indian Students' Societies.... About one hundred journalists gathered to meet him. Bose replied to a barrage of questions fired at him coolly, adroitly and with the greatest good humour."

During this visit, Subhas clearly stated his views:: if Britain granted complete independence to India and allowed her to frame her own constitution, then in future cordial relations could certainly be achieved between Britain and India. For the next eight days, he had a hectic time schedule. He addressed many meetings, attended many receptions and dinners, and had discussions with leaders of the National Government and of the Labour Party and with communists and others. On 11 January there was a reception in his honour presided over by the eminent Communist leader R.P. Dutt. In a significant speech, Subhas said, "India's destiny is bound up with that of the rest of humanity... the Congress has begun to realize that India's struggle for freedom, democracy and socialism was part of the world struggle, extending from East to West, through China, Spain and

Abyssinia. India could no longer regard herself as isolated."

R.P. Dutt, in a private interview with him, sought his clarification as to what he meant by a synthesis of Fascism and Communism, that he had suggested in his book *The Indian Struggle*, published in 1934. In a rare self-critical tone, Subhas replied, as stated earlier, "Perhaps the expression I used was not a happy one. But I should like to point out that when I was writing the book, Fascism had not started on its imperialist expedition...." He, however, held that in the period between 1930 and 1934, the Indian Communists had been hostile to the great Civil Disobedience Movement for Indian independence. That had made Subhas critical about Communists. It may be added that in the main this criticism of the Indian Communists by Subhas was entirely justified. He added at the end of his interview with R.P. Dutt that he was quite satisfied that Communism... 'gives full support to the struggle for national independence and recognises this as an integral part of its world outlook'.

During this short visit to England, Subhas met a variety of people including Labour Party leaders like Clement Atlee, Arthur Greenwood and Sir Strafford Cripps as well as eminent intellectuals like Harold Laski and J.B.S. Haldane. He also paid a nostalgic visit to Cambridge where he met a large gathering of teachers and students. On January 16, he met the Irish President de Valera. What passed between them has unfortunately not been recorded. The only point to be noted here is that the *News Chronicle*, a well-known English daily, characterized Subhas Chandra as "India's de Valera"

On 18 January 1938, J.B. Kripalani, General Secretary of the Indian National Congress, announced in India that Subhas Chandra Bose had been elected President for the 51st session of the Indian National Congress to be held at Haripura in Gujarat. Gandhiji sent a telegram to Subhas which read in part: "God give you strength to bear the weight of Jawaharlal's mantle". Perhaps, Gandhiji was not very happy with this choice but there was no other option. A few months earlier, in a confidential letter to Sardar Patel, on 1 November 1937, Gandhiji had written, "I have observed that

Subhas is not at all dependable. However, there is nobody but he who can be the President."

Subhas immediately cut short his visit and left by plane from London on 19 January, stopped at Prague, Naples and Karachi for short periods and arrived in Calcutta on 24 January. The Congress session which he was to preside was just a few weeks away and he got down seriously to the task of preparing for this new role. On 11 February 1938, he left Calcutta by a special train and was received at Bardoli by a large number of people headed by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. From there he travelled by car to Haripura. Another new and important chapter in the life of Subhas Chandra was about to begin, which his biographer Gordon has described as the period when from a stormy rebel Subhas became a *deshanayak*.

CHAPTER 10

SUBHAS BOSE AS CONGRESS PRESIDENT

Subhas Chandra Bose was elected Congress President at Haripura unanimously. We have already mentioned that Gandhiji did not consider him dependable. A section of the Congress, sometimes referred to as Congress Right-wing, was also suspicious about him. The one silver lining was that for a brief period the relations between Subhas and Jawaharlal were cordial.

In his Presidential Address, Subhas Chandra declared, "But can the British empire transform itself into a federation of free nations with one bold sweep? It is for the British people to answer this question.... This transformation will be possible... only if Great Britain becomes a socialist state.... [It] is impossible to achieve this without the liquidation of colonialism and that we who are fighting for the political freedom of India and the other enslaved countries of the British empire are incidentally fighting for the economic emancipation of the British people as well".

In his long Address, Subhas went on to re-state at some length the fundamental aims and objectives of the Indian National Congress. Then he took up the issue of what role the Congress should play vis-a-vis the trade unions and the Kisan Sabhas. In 1938, the Left inside the national movement was demanding that trade unions and Kisan Sabhas should be given collective affiliation to the Congress. The Congress Right-wing was totally opposed to this. Subhas Chandra declared, "Personally I hold the view that the day will come



Subhas Chandra Bose, President of Haripura Congress

when we shall have to grant this affiliation in order to bring all progressive and anti-imperialist organisations under the influence and control of the Congress".

The difference between the Right and the Left inside the Congress was becoming acute. Subhas tackled this question in a forthright manner and said, "Inside the Congress there are differences between the right and the left which it would be futile to ignore. Outside, there is the challenge of British Imperialism which we are called upon to face. What shall we do in this crisis? Need I say that we have to stand four-square against all the storms that may beset our path, and be impervious to all the designs that our rulers may employ? The Congress today is one supreme organ of mass struggle. It may have its right bloc and its left—but it is a common platform for all anti-imperialist organizations striving for Indian emancipation. Let us, therefore, rally the whole country under the banner of the Indian National Congress, I would appeal specially to the leftist groups in the country to pull all their strength and their resources for democratising the Congress and reorganizing it on the broadest anti-imperialist basis. In making this appeal, I am greatly encouraged by the attitude of the leaders of the British Communist Party whose general policy with regard to India seems to me to be in keeping with that of the Indian National Congress."

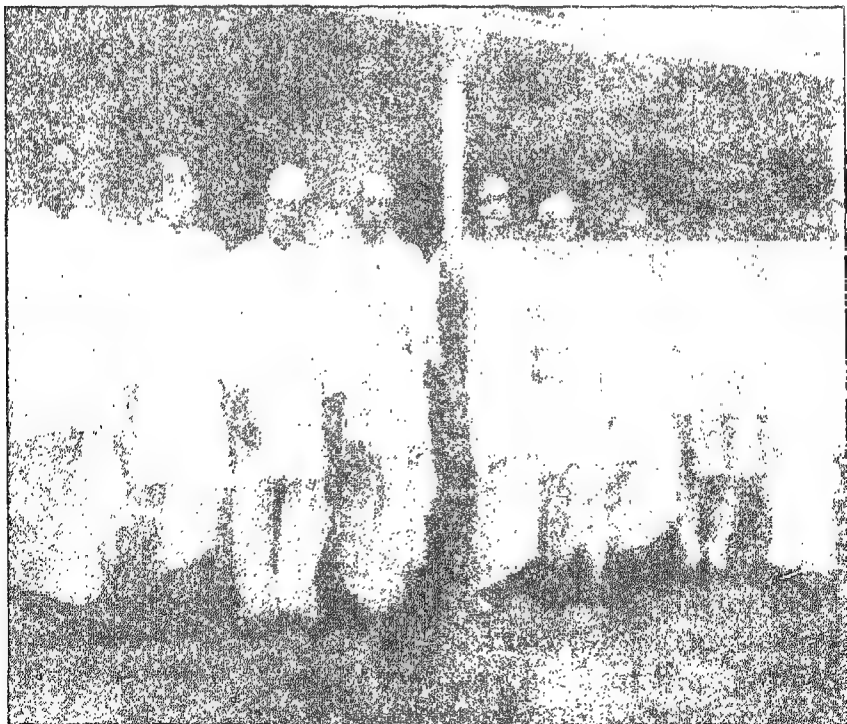
The Haripura speech was generally welcomed by the Indian Left. But on one question, there was a jarring note. In the foreign policy section of the speech of Subhas, there was no forthright condemnation of fascism in Germany, Italy and Japan. Jawaharlal Nehru and the Communists were unhappy with this. But Subhas Chandra openly said in his Presidential Address that he was willing to take the help of any country, whatever their internal policies, if they would help him to defeat the British rulers. However, he expressed India's sympathy and support for the Chinese people in their desperate struggle against Japanese fascism. The Congress decided to send a Medical Mission to China and Subhas heartily endorsed this through a press statement on 30 June 1938.

At the instance of the Congress and with the full support of Jawaharlal Nehru and the blessings of the poet Rabindranath Tagore, an All India National Planning Committee was set up and its inaugural function was held in Bombay on 17 December 1938 and Subhas presided over it.

Subhas Chandra himself summed up this period of his activities neatly: "Later in the year 1938, [I] launched the National Planning Committee for drawing up a comprehensive plan of industrialisation and of national development. This caused further annoyance to Mahatma Gandhi who was opposed to industrialisation". In fact, the idea of a Planning Commission, modelled on that of the Soviet Union and other European nations, was actually the brainchild of the eminent Indian scientist Dr Meghnad Saha. He had broached the subject before the poet Rabindranath Tagore who gave the idea his whole-hearted support. Tagore's secretary Anil Kumar Chanda had, in fact, written a confidential letter to Jawaharlal Nehru informing him of the poet's strong support to Dr Saha's concept of a National Planning Committee and also giving the poet's views that since Gandhiji and the orthodox Congress leaders who were opposed to industrialisation, the Congress should sponsor the National Planning Committee at a time when Jawaharlal or Subhas Chandra Bose was the Congress President. This whole episode has been all too briefly summed up by Subhas in the one single sentence already referred to.

Another idea which Subhas floated as Congress President was his advocacy of one common language for the whole country, which would be a blend of Hindi and Urdu, but written in the Roman script. At first, Subhas Chandra was opposed to using a foreign script thinking it anti-national. He later on changed his views. In his own words, "My visit to Turkey in 1934 was responsible for converting me. I then realized for the first time what a great advantage it was to have the same script as the rest of the world". As we know, Subhas put this idea into effect late in 1943 after he had formed the INA.

Subhas's own views about the **emerging** Indian left-wing forces, inside and outside the Congress, can perhaps best be understood by his own brief assessment. He wrote, "The emergence of the Congress Socialist Party in 1934 was a sure indication of the resurgence of the radical or left wing forces in the country. This was accompanied by a phenomenal awakening among the peasantry and the students, and to some extent, among the workers. For the first time, there emerged a centralised All India Peasants' Organisation called the All India Kisan Sabha, the most prominent leader of which was Swami Sahajananda Saraswati. The Students' movement also, which had gone through many ups and downs in the past, was centralised under the leadership of the All India Students' Federation. The All India Trade Union Congress, which had experienced two successive splits — in 1929 in Nagpur and in 1931 in Calcutta — was once again unified under a strong leadership representing all shades of



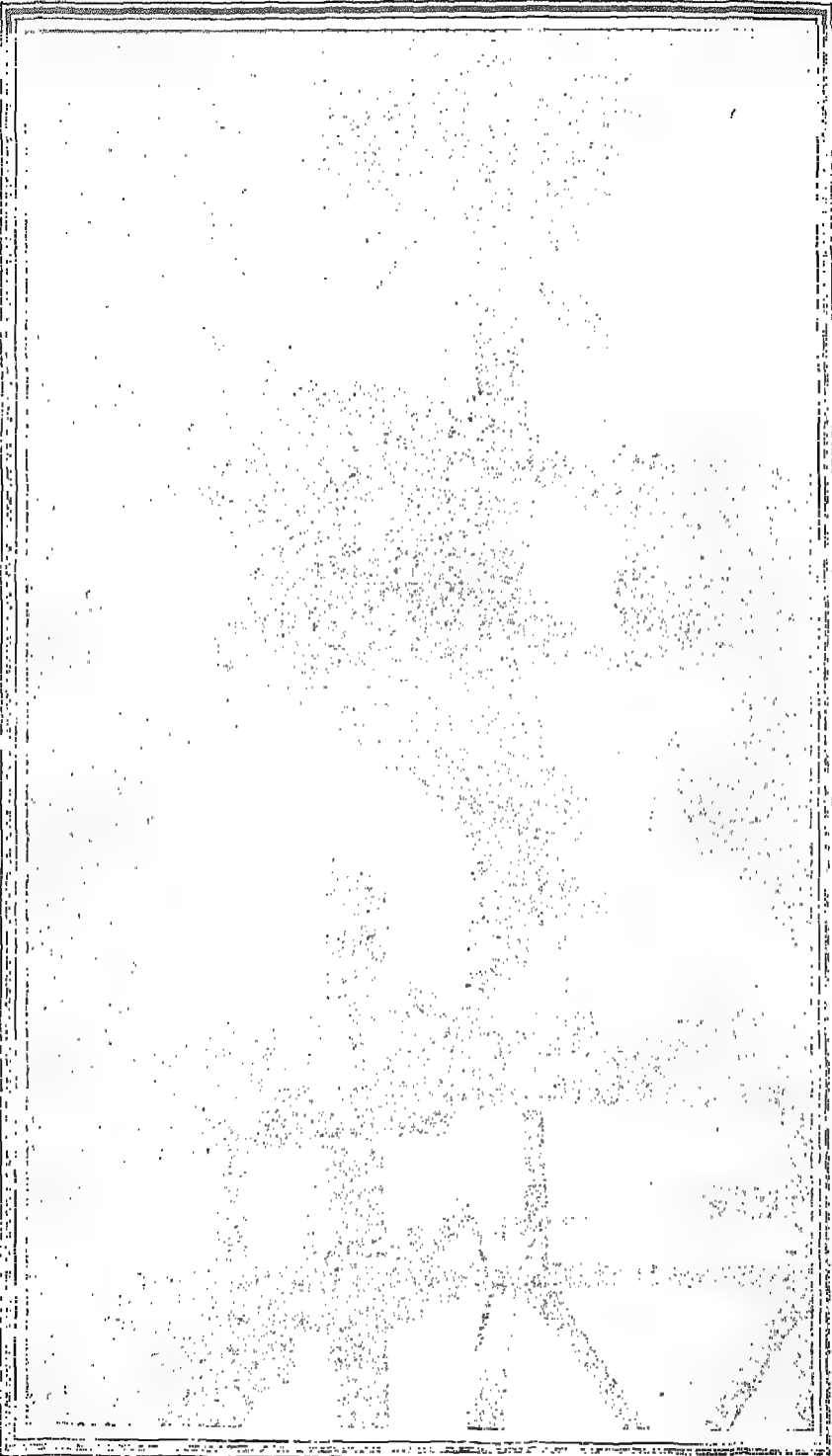
With Members of the Congress Working Committee, April 1938

opinion, both Right and Left. In the literary world, too, there was an attempt to organise the progressive writers". It is rather surprising that there is no mention of the Indian Communists, who at that time were one of the strongest and perhaps the most organised force among the Indian Left.

The Haripura session of the Indian National Congress did not witness any major friction between the official Congress leadership and Subhas. Sarat Chandra Bose was the main supporter of Sardar Patel's resolution on the ministerial crisis in U.P. and Bihar. However, when the names of the Working Committee members for 1938 were announced, the Left found that their strong presence in the Nehru-led Working Committee of 1936 and 1937 had been substantially reduced. Now only Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose represented the Left forces in the Congress Working Committee. There was not a single Congress Socialist, Royist or Communist in this Working Committee. It is surprising that Subhas Chandra Bose accepted this composition of the Working Committee.

Gandhiji, in this phase, was quite happy with the functioning of Subhas. In a letter to Sardar Patel, he chided him: "I think your speech was too aggressive. The Socialists cannot be won over in this manner. If you feel that you had made a mistake, please get Subhas's special permission and go up to the dias, wipe their tears and make them smile."

Subhas Chandra Bose, as we have seen, was strongly opposed to communalism of all shapes and forms, and was fundamentally a supporter of secularism. On the issue of Hindu-Muslim relations, Subhas was broadly in agreement with the Congress leadership. It was his international outlook that was sharply at variance with not only that of the Congress leadership but also of large sections of the Indian Left. Early in 1939, he tried to contact leaders of Germany, Japan and Italy, whom he considered to be inveterate enemies of the British, as well as the Soviet Union. On 22 December 1938, Subhas had actually met Nazi official Dr Urchs at Bombay and told him that among the Indian leaders only Jawaharlal Nehru and the Communists were



With Jawaharlal Nehru at a meeting of the AICC, May 1939

markedly anti-German.

The Congress Medical Mission was sent to China as India's gesture of solidarity with China and her struggle against Japanese imperialism. Subhas was the Congress President at that time, but he was not as harsh a critic of Japan as Nehru or the poet Rabindranath Tagore.

The term of Subhas's Presidentship was running out and the question arose as to whether Subhas should be re-elected Congress President. The Indian Communists and their leader P.C. Joshi were the first to openly come out calling for the election of Subhas Chandra Bose as President of the Indian National Congress for the second time. The supporters of M.N. Roy soon followed suit and ultimately even the Congress Socialists lent their support. It is interesting to note at this point that the poet Rabindranath Tagore also wrote a confidential letter to Gandhiji requesting him to agree to the re-election of Subhas as President of the Indian National Congress. But Gandhiji respectfully replied that it would be better for Subhas not to contest the election this time.

The Congress was now sharply divided. The majority members of the Working Committee considered Right-wingers, including Sardar Patel, Acharya J.B. Kripalani and others called upon Subhas not to stand for election as President. They recommended an Andhra Congress leader Pattabhi Sitaramayya for the post of Congress President for the coming session at Tripuri. Sarat Bose replied on behalf of his brother and sent a wire to Patel saying that only Subhas could unite the Congress and supporting Pattabhi would mean dividing the Congress. Subhas decided to stand and the battle lines were now clearly drawn. On 29 January 1939, Subhas Chandra Bose was re-elected Congress President with united Leftist support, defeating Pattabhi Sitaramayya by 1580 to 1375 votes.

The Congress leaders opposed to Subhas Bose were now determined to obstruct him at every step. What about Gandhiji? It has been generally suggested that Gandhiji master-minded this opposition to Subhas after he was re-elected Congress President, but reality is more complex. In

an article written in early February 1939, Gandhiji stated, "Sri Subhas Bose has achieved a decisive victory. ... I do not subscribe to ...the arguments in his manifestos.... Nevertheless, I am glad of his victory ... it is plain to me that the delegates do not approve of the principles and policy for which I stand. I rejoice in this defeat.... After all Subhas Babu is not an enemy of his country. He has suffered for it. In his opinion his is the most forward and boldest policy and programme.... The minority may not obstruct on any account. They must abstain when they cannot cooperate".

Subhas was also conciliatory in his public statements towards Gandhiji. He declared: " I do not know what opinion Mahatmaji has of me. But whatever his view may be, it will always be my aim and object to try and win his confidence". On 15 February 1939, Subhas met Gandhiji and sought his support. But on 22 February, 1939 all the existing Congress Working Committee members, excepting the Bose brothers, resigned from their posts. The list included Jawaharlal Nehru. What about the Leftists? They had voted solidly for Subhas. The Communists thought that a strong Left group in the Congress Working Committee would do, while the Congress Socialist Party (C.S.P.) wanted a Leftist majority in the Working Committee.

M.N. Roy was more forthright. In a letter to Subhas Chandra on 1st February 1939, Roy wrote that Subhas Chandra must set up a Leftist Working Committee and appoint M.N. Roy as its general secretary. Roy wrote : "Gandhist principle cannot be reconciled with honest anti-imperialist politics ... the new leadership of the Congress should have the courage and conviction of acting independently even of the wishes of Gandhiji when these run counter to the objective revolutionary urge of the movement."

The Congress session began in Tripuri in Central Provinces on 10 March 1939. Subhas Chandra was seriously ill at this time. Yet he attended the Tripuri Congress. In this Congress, Govind Ballabh Pant, Congress leader from U.P., moved a resolution expressing full confidence in the leadership of Gandhiji and requested Subhas Chandra as

President to nominate the Working Committee in accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji.

While the C.P.I. and the Royists were agreed that the Pant Resolution should be opposed, the C.S.P. leadership decided to abstain. The combined Leftist amendments of the Pant Resolution were defeated at Tripuri by 135 votes to 218. Subhas was now in a dilemma. He failed to secure Gandhiji's support in nominating the Working Committee. Why did he not nominate a Left-dominated Working Committee? In a letter to one of his nephews on 11 April 1939, Subhas wrote, "Our defeat at Tripuri was due to the betrayal of the C.S.P. leadership and some bungling in tactics on our side The Communist Party was also sailing with the C.S.P. but at the last moment, the revolt of the rank and file brought about a reversal of its policy... nobody had done more harm to our cause in this crisis than Pandit Nehru. If he had been with us we would have had a majority.... The immediate future is very uncertain. It is even possible that ultimately I may have to resign".

The All India Congress Committee met in Calcutta on 29 April 1939. Subhas tendered his resignation as Congress President. In his resignation letter, he wrote, "My own conviction is that in view of the critical times that are ahead of us in India and abroad, we should have a composite cabinet commanding the confidence of the largest number of Congress possible I feel that my presence as President at this juncture may possibly be a sort of obstacle After matured deliberation, therefore, and in an entirely helpful spirit, I am placing my resignation in your hands". Ultimately Subhas's resignation was accepted and Dr Rajendra Prasad was elected president for the rest of the term. There was widespread bitterness in Left circles, especially in Bengal.

On 3 May, Subhas Chandra announced the formation of a new group within the Congress to be called the Forward Bloc. He declared that the object of the Forward Bloc would be to "rally all radical and anti-imperialist progressive elements in the country on the basis of a minimum common programme representing the greatest common measure of

agreement among radicals of all shades of opinion." He expected that Socialists, Communists, Royists and supporters of Swami Sahajanianda would join the Forward Bloc but this did not materialise. In mid-June 1939, the first All India Forward Bloc Conference was held in Bombay. This conference gave the call for the formation of a Left Consolidation Committee. The L.C.C. was to have an equal number of representatives from the C.S.P., Royists, C.P.I. and the Forward Bloc. A new phase in the political career of Subhas had begun.

CHAPTER 11

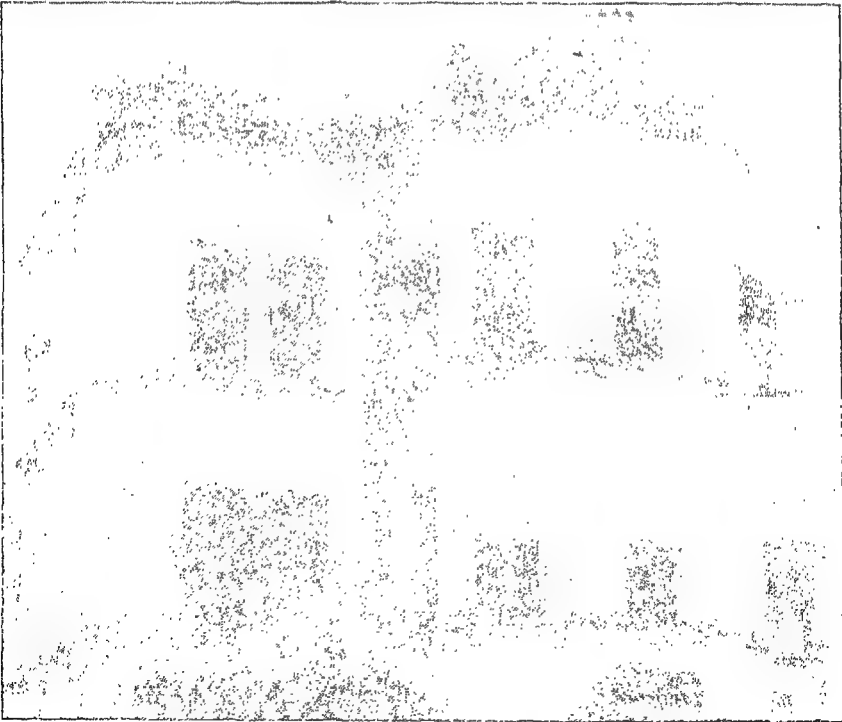
'THE GREAT ESCAPE'

The war clouds were now gathering fast in Europe. Imperialist repression was again mounting in India. Subhas Chandra Bose and the Left Consolidation Committee decided to observe 9 July 1939 as "Left Day". The Congress High Command issued a statement calling upon Congressmen not to participate in this demonstration. The Left Day was observed throughout India in a big way and the Congress Working Committee decided to take stern disciplinary action against Subhas Chandra Bose. They disqualified him as President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and debarred him from being a member of any elective Congress Committee for three years as from August 1939. Subhas Chandra declared in a spirited statement on 19 August 1939: "By trying to warn the country about the continued drift towards Constitutionalism and Reformism, by protesting against resolutions which seek to kill the revolutionary spirit of the Congress, by working for the cause of Left consolidation and... by consistently appealing to the country to prepare for the coming struggle, I have committed a crime for which I have to pay the penalty. The sentence meted out to me may have come as a shock to the vast majority of our countrymen, but not to me."

Rabindranath Tagore usually kept himself aloof from factional struggles in the national movement but now he supported Subhas Chandra firmly. In an article in Bengali called '*Deshanayak*'. Tagore declared, "As Bengal's poet, I today acknowledge you as the honoured leader of the people of Bengal Suffering from the deadening effect of the prolonged punishment inflicted upon her young generation

and disintegrated by internal faction, Bengal is passing through a period of dark despair At such a juncture of nationwide crisis, we require the service of a forceful personality, the invincible faith of a natural leader, who can defy the adverse fate that threatens our progress Let Bengal affirm in one united voice that her deliverer's seat is ready, spread for you. Long ago I sent out a call for a leader of Bengal who had yet to come. After a lapse of many years I am addressing one who has come into the full light of recognition. My days have come to their end. I may not join him in the fight that is to come. I can only bless him, knowing that he had made his country's burden of sorrow his own, that his final reward is fast coming as his country's freedom".

It is also on record that Rabindranath requested Gandhiji in a telegram that the disciplinary action against Subhas Chandra be cancelled in the interest of national unity. Gandhiji respectfully informed Rabindranath that the Congress Working



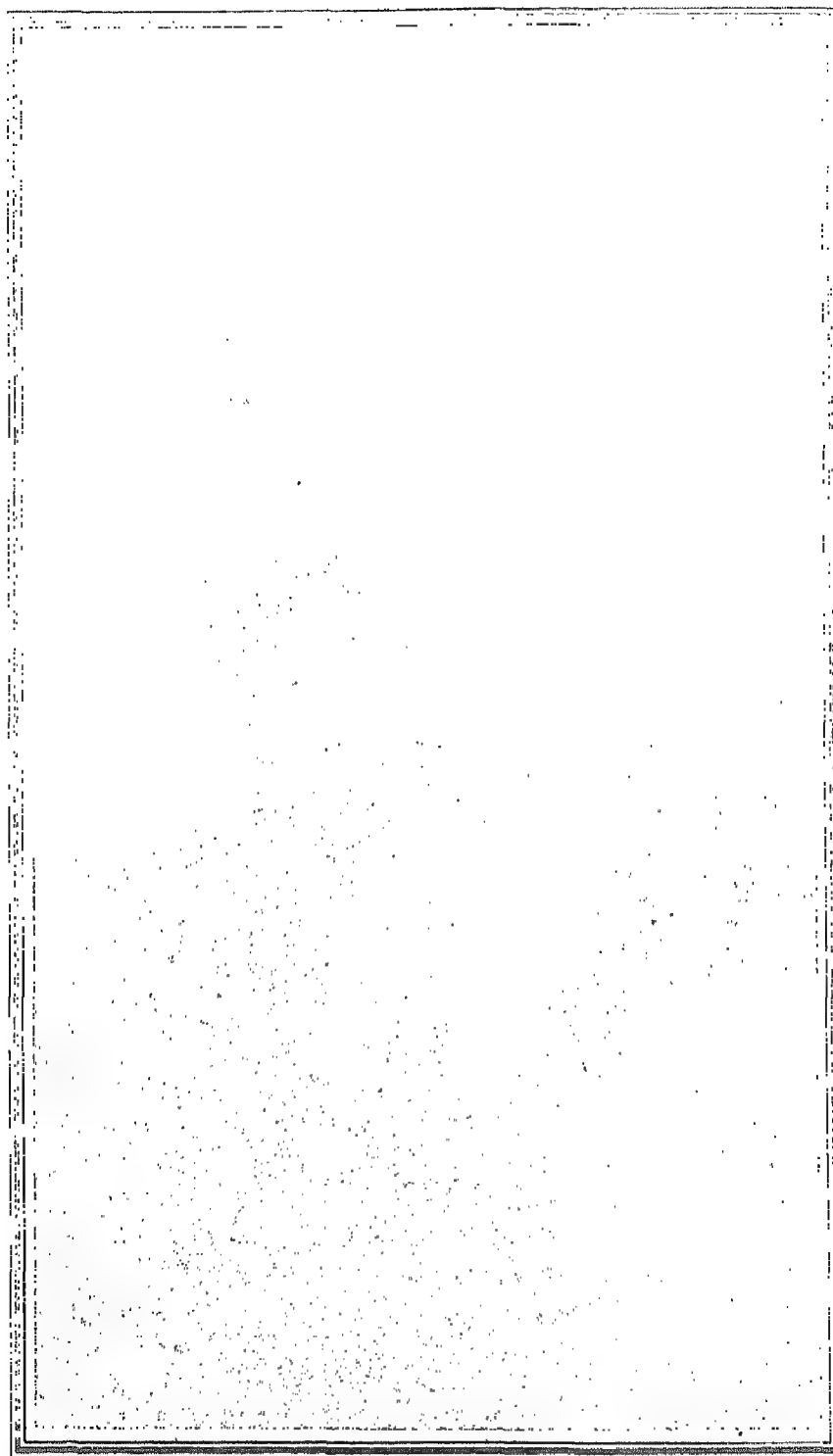
*The Elgin Road residence of Subhas Chandra Bose
in Calcutta from where he escaped in 1941*

Committee was unable to do so. In a letter to C.F. Andrews on 15 January 1940, Gandhiji wrote, "His (Subhas) politics show sharp differences. They seem to be unbridgable. I am quite clear that the matter is too complicated for *Gurudev* to handle. Let him trust that no one in the Committee has anything personal against Subhas. For me he is as my son".

So, Gandhiji and the Working Committee and Subhas Chandra now stood confronting each other; the parting of ways had indeed come. Jawaharlal at this point of time was much more unkind towards Subhas. In a letter written to V.K. Krishna Menon on 2 March 1940, Jawaharlal commented that Subhas Chandra "now talks the most arrant nonsense about rival Congress (He) does not seem to have an idea in his head and except for going on talking about leftists and rightists he says little that is intelligible".

Early in September 1939, the Second World War started. On 9 September the Congress Working Committee met at Wardha. Subhas Chandra was specially invited to attend the meeting. The Committee unanimously declared that the Congress would not support the war effort unless the British Government gave a categorical assurance that India would be given independence after the war. The response of the Viceroy of India on 17 October was most unsatisfactory. The Congress leadership called upon the Provincial Congress Ministries to resign. Nehru and the Communist Left now took a combined anti-imperialist and anti-fascist stance but Subhas Chandra's views were somewhat different. He wanted to utilize the war situation to India's advantage and to him the enemies of the British were his friends. Presiding over the annual conference of the All India Students' Federation at Delhi in January 1940, Subhas Chandra declared, "The time has come for all of us to dare and act. I am also reminded of the inspiring words by a famous Italian General 'I shall give you hunger, thirst, privation, forced marches and death if you will follow me'. Let these words ring in our ears now and inspire us to march forward and to dare and act. Only then shall we win victory and Swaraj."

The Congress was holding its annual conference in March



As Orlando Mazzotta, 1941

1940 in Ramgarh in Chotanagpur. Subhas Chandra held a rival Anti-Compromise Conference at the same time in nearby Bihita. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, the militant Kisan leader of Bihar, mobilised thousands of peasants for the Anti-Compromise Conference. In his speech Subhas Chandra declared, "Germany may be a Fascist or an Imperialist power, ruthless or cruel but one cannot help admiring her qualities". At Ramgarh he did not exactly praise the Nazis but was already obviously thinking in terms of the enemy's enemy being his friend.

In June 1940, Subhas Chandra went to Wardha to meet Gandhiji but their views seemed to be irreconcilable. Subhas Chandra came back to Calcutta and launched the movement for the removal of the Holwell Monument. This monument to the victims of the so-called Black Hole tragedy stood in the heart of Calcutta and was considered 'the symbol of our slavery and humiliation'. The movement was to start on 3 July 1940 but the government arrested Subhas Chandra under the Defence of India Act on 2 July. Subhas was kept in jail indefinitely while the war dragged on. In the second part of his book, *The Indian struggle*, Subhas wrote that he was convinced of three things. "Firstly, Britain would lose the war and the British empire would break up. Secondly, in spite of being in a precarious position, the British would not hand over power to the Indian people and the latter would have to fight for their freedom. Thirdly, India would win her independence if she played her part in the war against Britain and collaborated with those powers that were fighting Britain." Thus Subhas Bose had already started thinking about overthrowing British rule in India with the help of the Axis Powers.

It was at this time that Subhas Chandra decided that he had to get out of prison by any means and escape from India. But the government was in no mood to release him. So he went on an indefinite hunger strike demanding his unconditional release. Within a week's time his condition in jail worsened and the government, bowing to public pressure, released Subhas Chandra on 5 December 1940.

Subhas Chandra now contacted Mian Akbar Shah, a Pathan member of the Forward Bloc Working Committee, who two decades earlier had been one of the main accused in the Peshawar-Bolshevik Conspiracy Case. Akbar came to Calcutta, held detailed talks with Subhas Chandra and fixed up plans for his escape to Afghanistan. Arrangements for his journey from Peshawar to Kabul were to be made by Achhar Singh Cheema, the Communist leader of the Punjab Kirti Kisan Party. The dramatic escape of Subhas Chandra has been graphically described by his nephew Dr Sisir K. Bose, in his book *The Great Escape*.

On the midnight of 16 January 1941, Subhas Chandra disguised himself as a Muslim and Sisir, his nephew, drove him to Gomoh to the house of his elder brother Asoke. Next night the two brothers drove Subhas Chandra to Gomoh Station and there he boarded the Kalka Mail, where a berth had been kept reserved for one Md. Ziauddin. Subhas changed trains near Delhi and boarded the Frontier Mail for Peshawar. Mian Akbar Shah was in the train. He watched Subhas get down at Peshawar Cantonment station and together with a cadre of Akbar Shah went to the shelter already fixed for him. On 21 January, Bhagat Ram Talwar, a Communist, utterly devoted to Subhas Chandra met him as per plan and prepared with him a detailed plan for the trip to Kabul. The details of this trip have been described by Bhagat Ram Talwar in his book *The Talwars of Pathan Land and Subhas Chandra's Great Escape*.

On 27 January 1941, Subhas Chandra and Bhagat Ram reached Kabul. Some historians and scholars have recently suggested that the British Secret Service knew about Subhas's escape but they left him alone in Kabul because they were happy to see Subhas Bose out of India. This view is based on some unverified documents obtained from the Moscow Archives in 1995 by a research team of the Asiatic Society of Calcutta, who had visited Russia. The writer does not give much credence to these documents.

In any case we have the stubborn evidence of the comments of the Home Department of the Government of Bengal in 1941

and the subsequent Bengal Governor's Report. Janvrin, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch Calcutta, in a confidential report wrote, "This morning [27 January 1941] an Inspector of this branch went to make enquiries into the circumstances of Subhas Bose's disappearance. The family members informed him that... [on the morning of 25 January they] found that he had disappeared. They say he took no warm clothing... or shoes with him and they believe that he has renounced the world and turned 'sanyasi'.... The above explanation of Subhas Bose's disappearance is plausible but there are grave reasons to doubt whether it is the true explanation." Officials in Delhi were angry with the performance of the Calcutta Special Branch and one Central Intelligence Branch officer noted on 13 February 1941 that "How he arranged to escape and where he now is, is still a mystery. [The government]... wanted to prevent Bose from doing harm within India or abroad. Bose hoodwinked the police and the governor was by no means proud of the performance.'

We come back to our narrative. From 28 January 1941, Subhas Chandra and Bhagat Ram tried to make contact with officials of the Soviet Government at Kabul. The Soviets did not encourage serious discussion for Subhas's entry to the Soviet Union. It was only then that Subhas considered other possibilities. On 2 February 1941, he located the German Legation and talked with a high official. The Germans told Subhas Bose that he would have to wait. It was only in mid-February that Thomas of the German Legation told Bhagat Ram that Germany, Italy and Japan had jointly asked the Soviet Union to grant Subhas Bose a transit visa for a journey through its territory into Europe.

With the help of the Germans, Subhas Bose made contact with the Italians. In late February, the Italians prepared a false passport for Subhas Bose and Md. Ziauddin now became Orlando Mazzotta. On 15 March 1941, the green signal came. On 19 March Subhas Bose was picked up from his residence and after crossing into the Soviet Union in a car, he was put on a train which took him to Moscow. From there he reached Berlin by plane in the first week of April 1941. Here Subhas

Chandra would try to secure active German help for the Indian freedom struggle and try to raise an Indian National Army from among the Indian prisoners of war. While he was biding his time in Kabul, he had written a long article called "Forward Bloc — its Justification". Bhagat Ram personally took the article to Calcutta and handed it over to Sarat Bose. Now the German phase of Subhas Chandra's plans to liberate India began.

CHAPTER 12

SUBHAS BOSE IN GERMANY

By the time Subhas Chandra Bose reached Berlin in April 1941, Hitler had already decided upon his plans to mount a massive aggression against the Soviet Union, a plan now known to the world as Operation Barbarossa. Before launching this attack, Hitler tried once more to make peace with Britain (France was already under his iron heel) by sending his deputy Rudolph Hess on a secret mission to Britain. But the plan misfired. Hess was caught by British Securitymen almost as soon as he landed in Britain and the pro-Nazi elements found themselves in total isolation. Hitler had a sneaking admiration for the British empire and he had told his devout admirers in 1941 that 'what India was for England, the territories of Russia will be for us.' Indian independence meant nothing to Hitler; in fact he believed that Indians deserved to be ruled by others.

Subhas Bose knew nothing of all this and he still had the illusion that Germany being the enemy of Britain would help advance the cause of Indian independence. Subhas prepared a lengthy memorandum to the German Government pointing out why the Axis Powers should support the cause of Indian nationalism. This document has been included in the 1964 edition of Bose's *The Indian Struggle*. In this memorandum, he wrote, "The British empire constitutes the greatest obstacle not only in the path of India's freedom but also in the path of human progress. Since the attitude of the Indian people is intensely hostile to the British in the present war, it is possible for them to materially assist in bringing about the overthrow of Great Britain. India's cooperation could be secured if the Indian people are assured that an Axis victory will mean for



Subhas Chandra Bose in Germany, 1942

them a free India". Subhas Bose further suggested that if he could raise 50,000 Indian soldiers from the Indian prisoners of war in the hands of the Germans, that 'National' army, with the help of the Germans would be able to drive out the weak British forces from India and liberate that country. However, he insisted that Germany must recognize his 'Free Indian Government' and promise to respect Indian independence in case of Axis victory.

Ribbentrop, Nazi Germany's Foreign Minister, promised Subhas Chandra German assistance but gave no assurance about recognizing his government or promising Indian independence. Subhas Chandra was disappointed. It was in this period that Emilie Schenkl came to Berlin from Vienna and lived with Subhas Chandra through his war-time stay in Europe. Most probably Subhas Chandra and Emilie were married sometime in the middle of 1941 and we know for certain that their daughter Anita Bose was born on 29 November 1942.

In May 1941, Subhas Chandra went to Rome accompanied by Emilie, hoping to get assistance from Mussolini in obtaining the declaration for Indian independence that he was vainly seeking from Nazi Germany. On 6 June Subhas met Count Ciano, Foreign Minister of Mussolini, but his mission was anything but a success. In fact, Ciano had made a harsh assessment of Subhas Bose in his private diary of 6 June 1941, where he wrote: "I receive Bose, the head of the Indian insurgent movement. He would like the Axis to make a declaration on the independence of India but in Berlin his proposals have been received with a great deal of reserve. Nor must we be compromised, especially because the value of this upstart is not clear."

Subhas Chandra, as we know, had considered both the Axis powers and Soviet Union as potential allies of the Indian independence struggle. In fact, after his arrival in Berlin in April 1941, he had congratulated the German Government for signing the Non-Aggression Pact with the Soviet Union. So when Germany attacked the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, Subhas Chandra was both surprised and extremely unhappy.

In a letter to one of his German contacts on 5 July 1941, he wrote, "The public reaction in my country to the new situation in the east is unfavourable towards your government."

Bose had a very frank interview with the officials of the German foreign ministry. The secret documents reveal that "Bose first spoke in detail concerning the repercussions of the German-Russian war on the public opinion in India.... The feelings of the Indian people were very decidedly on the Russian side because the Indian people were sure that Germany was the aggressor and thus also an imperialist power dangerous to India Bose's statements indicate that... he is strongly influenced by the Soviet thesis even on the question of the origin of the conflict Bose ... asked that the Foreign Minister be told that this proclamation (in favour of a free India) be issued as soon as possible."

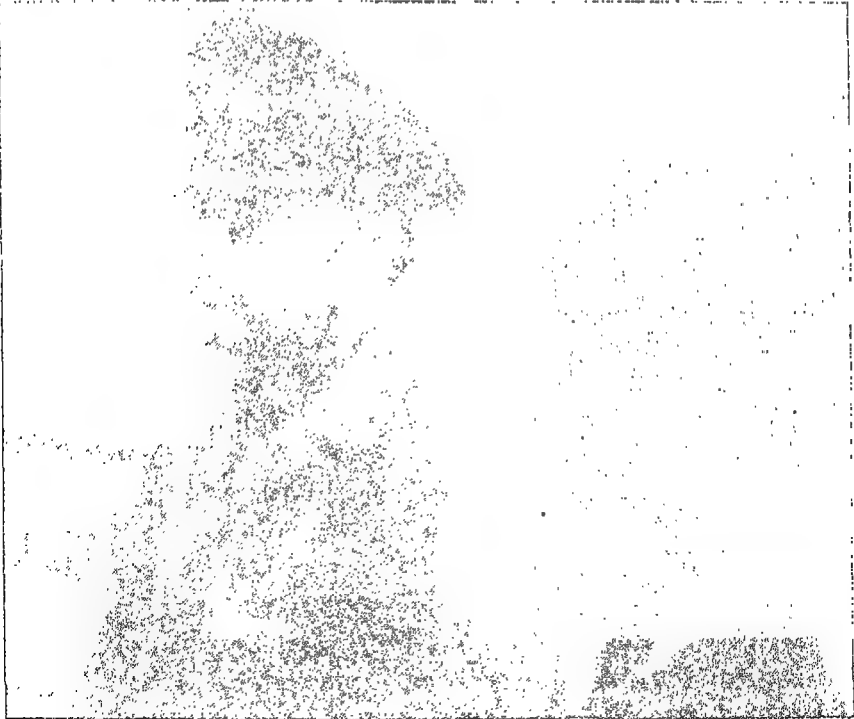
Anyway, a Free India Centre was set up in Berlin on 2 November 1941 and from early 1942 a bilingual German and English monthly, *Azad Hind*, started appearing with Bose as the editor-in-chief and Promode Ranjan Sengupta as his assistant. Broadcasts were also started from an Azad Hind Radio in Berlin in English, Hindustani, Bengali and many other Indian languages including Pashtu. This has been recorded in detail by M.R. Vyas, one of Subhas Chandra's closest colleagues in this period, in his book *Passage Through a Turbulent Era*.

It was about this time that the Government of India announced in the Central Legislative Assembly on 10 November 1941 that Subhas Chandra Bose had gone over to the enemy. The mouthpiece of British capital in India, *The Statesman* wrote in a leading article at this time that "Bose's views are those of the Nazis, and he makes no secret of it. ... If therefore Mr Subhas Bose is with the Nazis — and the German Radio claimed to know his whereabouts as early as last January— he is where he belongs."

Much has been said about Bose's Indian Legion in Germany but his efforts to recruit soldiers for an Indian National Army were not a great success. Abid Hasan, a loyal supporter of Subhas Chandra, states that out of the 17,000

Indian prisoners, only about 2500 volunteered to join the Indian National Army. Hasan in his memoir states that a large number of the Indian prisoners 'were so loyal to the British that they would never join ... some did not want to break the oath they had taken over the Gita, the Koran and the Gurugranth A major part of them were worried about their families Another was that they had opposed and fought against the Germans. To join hands with the enemy — went against the thinking of a soldier'. Whatever the reason, most of the Indian prisoners refused to join the Indian Legion and attacked Hasan and others as 'German stooges'.

This writer thinks that an additional reason for the reluctance of Indian prisoners to join Subhas Bose's Indian Legion was the rules and regulations that the Nazis had imposed on them. These were that the Indian soldiers would be trained according to German standards and they were to be considered part of the German army. They would have to wear German uniforms with swastika and eagle. Eventually



During his submarine journey with Abid Hasan, 1943

they would become a part of the Azad Hind Fauj. Hugh Toye in his unpublished book *Subhas Pasha* quotes the oath, which Leonard Gordon has reproduced in his book, that the Indian soldiers had to take. It was as follows: "I swear by God this holy oath that I will obey the leader of the German State and People, Adolf Hitler, as commander of the German Armed Forces, in the fight for the freedom of India, in which fight the leader is Subhas Chandra Bose and that as a brave soldier, I am willing to lay down my life for this oath."

It was at this time that the title of Netaji came to be given to Subhas Chandra. Vyas writes that they faced the problem of what to call their leader. One of the Indian soldiers who had joined the Indian Legion solved their problem. He came forward with *Hamare Neta*. Vyas adds: "We improved upon it: Netaji." However, according to Vyas, "Subhas Bose strongly disapproved of it. He began to yield only when he saw that our military group firmly went on calling him Netaji".

On 15 February 1942, Singapore fell to the Japanese and on that day Subhas Chandra broke all secrecy and spoke over the Azad Hind Radio in his own name. He said, "The fall of Singapore means the collapse of the British empire ... and the dawn of a new era in Indian history... the enemies of British imperialism are today our natural friends.... During our struggle for full independence we shall heartily cooperate with all those who will help in overthrowing the common enemy... the hour of India's salvation is at hand".

Nearly one lakh British-Indian soldiers were taken prisoner by the Japanese after the fall of Singapore. Subhas Chandra had contacted Japanese high officials and through them some Indians to recruit volunteers from these Indian prisoners of war. The Japanese had in the meanwhile selected Major Iwaichi Fujiwara , a young Japanese officer, for helping Indians for this purpose. Fujiwara had as his closest colleague a prisoner of war as early as December 1941. Captain Mohan Singh readily agreed to try to organise an Indian National Army. On 17 February 1942, about 45,000 Indian prisoners of war were taken to the Singapore Racecourse. Fujiwara and Mohan Singh addressed them. Both of them assured that the Japanese

sincerely wanted to help the Indian Independence Movement. Mohan Singh wrote many years later: "I asked the soldiers to raise hands if any one from amongst them would like to volunteer to join this force and fight for the liberation of his country Along with the raising of hands, thousands of turbans and caps were hurled up in the air... soldiers jumped to their feet... with prolonged shouts of 'Inquilab Zindabad' ". Fujiwara also wrote that after expressing his admiration for Subhas Chandra Bose, Mohan Singh declared that Indians living in Asia would rise if a revolutionary such as Bose could be persuaded to come to Asia to lead this movement.

At this time, there were a number of organizations of Indians living in East and South-East Asia. Rash Behari Bose, an Indian revolutionary who had escaped to Japan during the First World War, had set up the the Indian Independence League. At a large gathering of Indians held in Bangkok in June 1942, the various Indian organisations in East and South-East Asia were merged into the Indian Independence League. Rash Behari Bose became its formal leader but most Indians had little confidence in him and suspected him to be a tool of the Japanese. A number of resolutions were passed at this conference. Through one of its resolutions, the conference called upon the Japanese general staff to accord the status of an allied army to the Indian National Army and by another resolution the conference invited Subhas Chandra Bose to come to East Asia and take over the leadership of the Movement. Subhas Chandra immediately responded through a warm message of cordial greetings to all of them.

On 1 September 1942, the First Division of the Indian National Army numbering 16,300 men came into existence. Joyce Lebra and K.K. Ghosh, an Indian scholar, have written in detail about this. Subhas Chandra was now extremely eager to go to South-East Asia and ultimately both Germany and Japan agreed to his trip to Japan. It was decided that Subhas would travel in a German submarine accompanied only by Abid Hasan and this submarine would transfer him to a Japanese submarine somewhere near the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. On 8 February 1943, Subhas Chandra and

Hasan climbed into the German submarine U-180 at Kiel. On 24 April, their submarine was sighted by the commander and men of the Japanese submarine I-29 in the Indian Ocean. In the morning of 28 April, Subhas Bose and Hasan left the German submarine, and moved towards the Japanese submarine in a rubber raft. The sea was rough and they climbed on to the Japanese submarine completely drenched. Now guests of the Imperial Japanese Navy, they started for East Asia.

CHAPTER 13

INDIA AND PROVISIONAL AZAD HIND GOVERNMENT

On 10 June 1943, Subhas Chandra Bose had his first meeting in Tokyo with Tojo, the Japanese Prime Minister. Both had a long discussion and Subhas Chandra in the very first meeting became convinced that Tojo was very different from Hitler and Mussolini. On 16 June, a meeting of the Japanese Diet (Parliament) took place where Subhas Chandra was present as an honoured guest. On that day Tojo categorically told the Parliament: "We firmly resolve that Japan will do everything possible to help Indian independence".

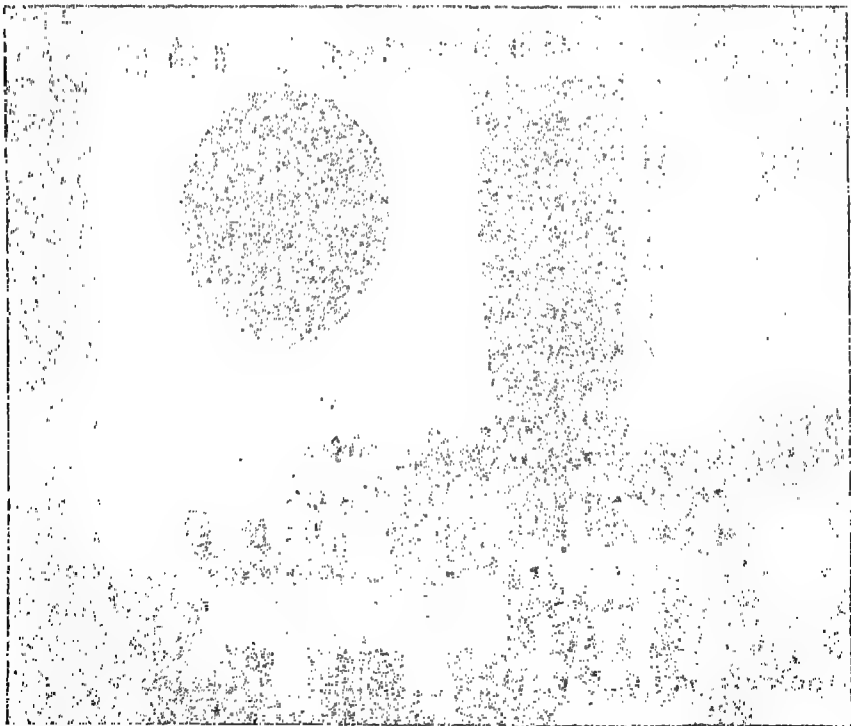
Subhas Chandra Bose addressed a press conference soon after. In his statement, he said, "If the Axis Powers win, India will regain her lost freedom. We should get our freedom only by shedding our own blood. Since the enemy fights with the sword, we too should fight with the sword. Only if a large number of Indians undergo this baptism of fire can they win the race and get the reward of freedom."

From Japan Subhas Chandra flew to Singapore. There in a public reception, the elder Indian revolutionary, Rash Behari Bose, presented Subhas Chandra to the cheering crowd and declared: "I have brought you this present, Subhas Chandra Bose, who symbolises all that is best, noblest, the most daring and the most dynamic in the youth of India. From now on Subhas Chandra Bose is your President, your leader in India's fight for independence". Subhas Chandra in his speech in the same reception meeting announced his intention to organise a Provisional Government of Free India, "to mobilise all our

forces effectively to lead the Indian revolution and to prepare the Indian people inside and outside India for an armed struggle. ..." He also said that to gain Indian freedom the soldiers of the INA may have to face hunger, thirst, privation, forced marches and death. It is in this meeting that Subhas Chandra gave to Indians his famous slogan *Chalo Delhi*.

From the very outset, Subhas Chandra gave great importance to recruiting women for the Indian National Army. Here he was fortunate to recruit in his ranks a thirty-year old young Tamil woman doctor, Lakshmi Swaminathan (who is now Lakshmi Sehgal). Many years later Capt. Lakshmi, as she was known, recalled that Subhas Chandra's "utter absolute sincerity struck me most and I felt that one could trust him completely and have the utmost confidence in him".

The Provisional Azad Hind Government was formally announced on 21 October 1943 with headquarters in Singapore. Subhas Chandra became the Prime Minister of



*Proclamation of the Provisional Government
of Azad Hind, 21 October 1943*

this Government as well as Minister of War and Foreign Affairs. The four other ministers were Capt. Lakshmi Swaminathan, S.A. Ayer (Publicity and Propaganda), Lt. Col. A.C. Chatterjee (Finance) and A.M. Sahay. On 23 October the Japanese Government announced its recognition of the Azad Hind Government followed by Germany, Italy and some other countries. de Valera, the Irish leader, sent personal congratulations to Subhas Bose. On 24 October, addressing a gathering of 50,000 Indians in Singapore, Subhas Chandra Bose declared that this would be a war to the finish until India won its independence. The entire crowd responded with thunderous slogans – *Inquilab Zindabad*, *Netaji ki jai* and *Chalo Delhi*!

In December 1943, the Japanese attack on India from Burma started. Here a few words need to be said about the relations between the Japanese and the INA. To most Japanese officers, the issue of Indian independence was irrelevant and to them, as Gordon has said, the conquest of India was to be carried out by the Japanese for the greater glory of Imperial Japan. Most of the INA officers did not trust the Japanese. Major General Shah Nawaz has written in his memoirs: "The Japanese did not trust the INA. They had found out through their liaison officers that the INA would not accept Japanese domination in any way and that they would fight the Japanese in case they had attempted to replace the British". It is strange to find that the well known London-based writer Nirod Chowdhuri in his recent work, *Thy Hand, Great Anarch*, has observed that the INA in reality never even fought the British army. This has been contradicted by a number of writers. We would like to quote from the long and detailed note on the INA prepared by the Intelligence Department of the Government of India, where it is noted, "A measure of courage cannot be denied to the leaders of INA front line units in Burma in 1945, when they faced up to British equipment, tanks, guns and aircraft with rifles, bullock carts and empty stomachs."

As is well known, the Japanese army and the INA marched into Manipur and they besieged Kohima and Imphal. Subhas



With women volunteers of INA in Singapore, 1944

Chandra and his INA hoisted the Indian National Flag near Kohima but were not able to capture it. Anyway, ultimately the INA had to retreat together with the Japanese in July 1944. Subhas Chandra was defiant but ultimately he had to agree. Subhas told the INA that they must fight and if needed die like heroes. He said that the Axis Powers might be beaten but the INA must leave behind them a legend of bravery and heroism that would make Indians proud and arouse them to further action to liberate India.

The size of this book would not permit a detailed story of the courage and heroism of the officers and men of the INA but a few incidents are mentioned so that the youth of this generation can have a glimpse of their heroic role. In May 1945, when defeat was certain for both the Japanese and the INA and Subhas Chandra was giving calls to fight unto death, a number of INA units fought on bravely. Major-General Shah Nawaz records in his diary on 7 May 1945, that Capt. Bagri with about a hundred INA men, equipped with grenades and bottles of petrol, charged at British tanks and perished. A group of 98 INA men under Lt. Gyan Singh Bisht armed only with rifles and two anti-tank mines, courageously fought against British motorized infantry columns of 13 tanks and 11 armoured cars. All the INA men were killed in this action.

At this time the Burmese National Army under General Aung San revolted against the Japanese. Aung San who was a friend of Subhas Chandra requested him that he and the INA should also revolt against the Japanese and make a deal with General Slim, Commander of the British army. Subhas Chandra refused to do so but gave a promise to Aung San that he would never allow the Japanese to use the INA against Aung San and his men.

By May 1945, Nazi Germany had unconditionally surrendered to the Allies. The defeat of Japan was certain. At this point of time, in a remarkable speech on 25 May 1945 from Singapore, Subhas Chandra declared, "The collapse of Germany will be the signal for the outbreak of acute conflict between the Soviets and the Anglo-Americans. The whole world knows that the war aims of Soviet Russia are different from

those of the Anglo-Americans.... The defeat of Germany has been due first and foremost to the tenacity, heroism and sacrifice of the people and the armed forces of the Soviet UnionThe whole world will therefore follow with breathless anxiety the moves of the Soviet Union in the days to come."

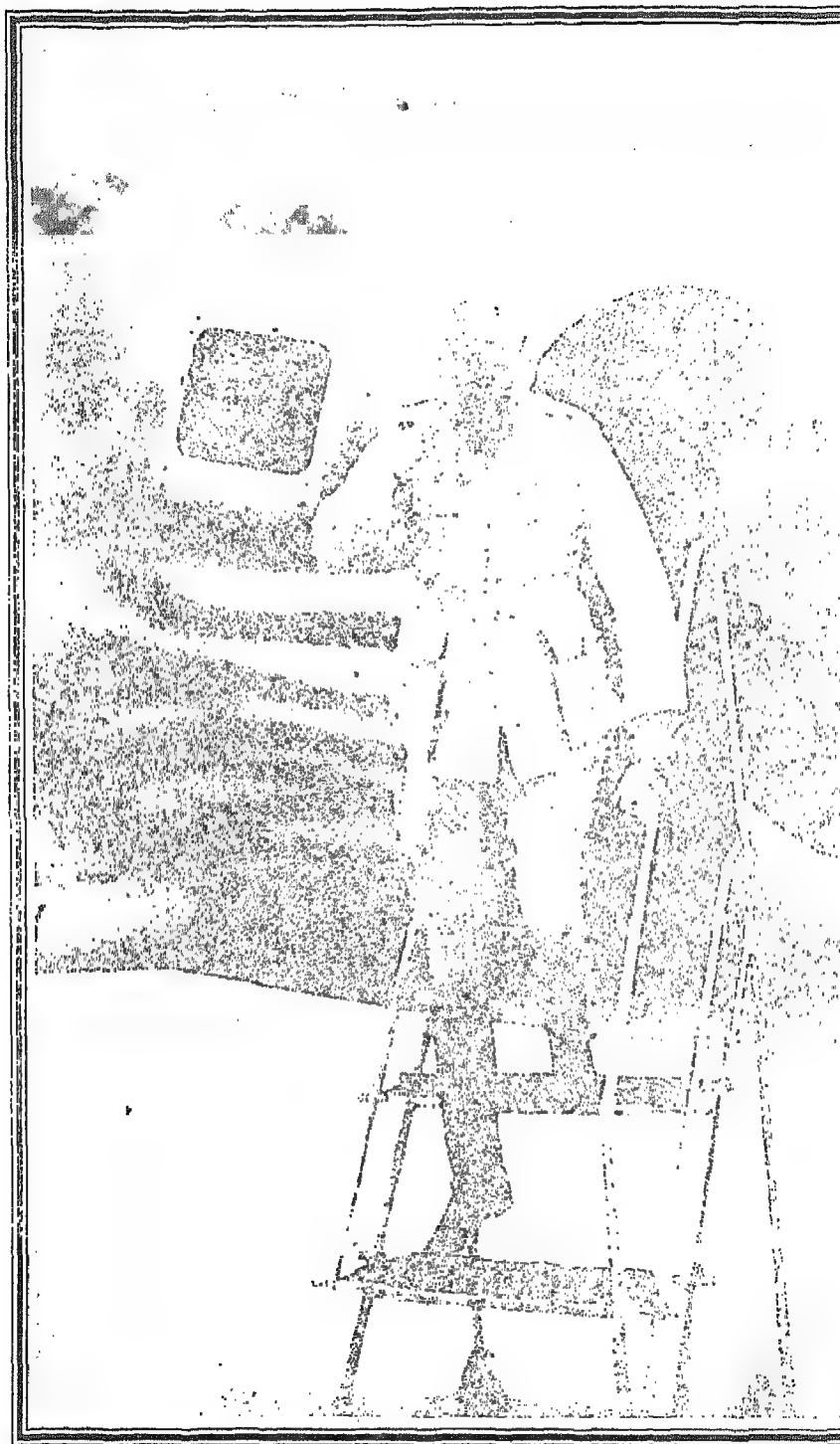
On 10 August 1945, Subhas Chandra learned that Russia had declared war on Japan. He also heard that Japan was about to surrender. On 16 August, Subhas Chandra arrived at Bangkok and from there he went to Taipei in Taiwan. On 17 August Subhas Chandra accompanied by Habibur Rahman boarded a Japanese plane reportedly to go to Dairen, in Manchuria, to contact the on-coming Soviet Army. How can we be sure that Subhas Chandra wanted to go to the Soviet Union? We can never be sure but there are some evidences which must be taken into account. On 16 August 1945, Subhas Chandra reportedly sent a message to the Japanese High Command that "Along with the trusted persons of my cabinet I would like to go to the Soviet Union. If it is necessary I shall enter the Soviet Union alone." Secret documents of the Japanese unearthed after World War II, also indicate that the Japanese had agreed to help Subhas Chandra Bose reach Manchuria and there make contact with the advancing Soviet Army.

Speculation about what would have happened if Subhas Chandra had reached Manchuria is irrelevant as it never took place. As we know, the plane carrying Subhas Chandra, Habibur Rahman, a Japanese General and Major Kono crashed violently almost immediately after it had been airborne. From all the reports and cross-references, this writer is convinced that Subhas Chandra suffered serious injuries as a result of the crash and he succumbed to these injuries on 19 August 1945. On 20 August his cremation took place at the Taipei crematorium. Thus passed away, under tragic circumstances, Subhas Chandra Bose, an explosively controversial figure in India's fight for freedom. According to Habibur Rahman who had suffered minor injuries, Subhas Chandra Bose said to him, "When you go back, tell my countrymen that I fought to the last for the freedom of my

country. And no power could now keep our country in bondage any longer. They should continue the struggle. India will be free before long."



*With Senior INA Officers :
A.C. Chatterjee, M.Z. Kiani and Habibur Rahaman*



*Last available photograph of Subhas Chandra Bose,
Saigon, 17 August 1945*

CHAPTER 14

THE LEGACY OF SUBHAS BOSE

Subhas Chandra was physically no more, but dead or alive, his legend, like a 'spectre', haunted the British Raj in India and acted as the main inspiring force for the unprecedented post-war upsurge in India in 1945-46 that shook British rule to its very foundations.

The British-Indian Government in August and September 1945 were not yet sure whether Subhas Chandra Bose was dead or alive, whether he had been actually killed in the air crash or whether it was a ploy on his part to go underground for the time being and emerge in India at a suitable time. The Viceroy Lord Wavell in a confidential note to Lord Pethic-Lawrence, Secretary of State for India, wrote on 20 August 1945, "This is the first occasion in which an anti-British politician, (Subhas Bose) has acquired a hold over a substantial number of men in the Indian Army, and the consequences are quite incalculable. Many of the INA men obviously have a great regard for Bose and he may yet become a national hero. The Cabinet should consider very carefully what to do about him. *If he could be disposed of without being sent back to India, I am sure it would be a good thing*". (emphasis added)

The implication in Wavell's confidential note is obvious — it would be dangerous to arrest Subhas Chandra, bring him back to India, and try him here. The 'better' course would be to 'dispose' him of elsewhere, i.e. kill him in secret. It is from such implications that suspicions were bound to arise in Indian minds as to whether the Taipei air crash was or was not secretly manipulated by the British Intelligence Service,

in collision with a section of the Japanese High Command.

Three days after Wavell's confidential note to Pethic-Lawrence, Mudie, Home Member, Government of India, prepared another note marked Top Secret and in it he wrote, "One of the most difficult questions that will confront the Home Department in the near future is the treatment of Subhas Chandra Bose. ... I do not think that there is any chance of Bose being hanged if he were tried in India. The pressure for his release would be too great; also his trial would result in great publicity for his doings...."

The British were also extremely worried about what was to be done with the INA prisoners. The Government of India had already divided the INA prisoners into three categories: Black, Grey and White. Those who were reported to be ardent supporters of Subhas Chandra and bitterly anti-British were called Blacks. Their number was nearly 7,000. On 21 August 1945, Wavell despatched a *most urgent* telegram to Secretary of State for India in London in which he wrote, "(The) great majority (of INA prisoners) acted under misapprehensions as to the facts and under extreme pressure. Indian opinion in general is inclined to regard Bose as a patriot, even though it may regard his actions as misguided. Harsh measures against the INA as a whole would undoubtedly be wounding the majority of Indian opinion. Our proposals are designed to steer a middle course between these two points of view and to punish only the leaders."

As late as October 1945, the British Cabinet was thinking in terms of inflicting severe punishment on leaders of INA so that it becomes a lesson for all Indians. In a confidential memo prepared for the Cabinet by the Secretary of State for India on 20 October 1945, where it was stated that for INA officers and soldiers of the Black category "punishment is either Death or Transportation for life ... On the other hand it should be remembered that Pandit Nehru and others are glorifying these men as true and long sighted patriots."

The trial of three leading INA officers — Shah Nawaz, Dhillon and Sehgal — started in the Red Fort, Delhi and the national leaders headed by Nehru took up their legal defence.

But the mass of the people of India refused to wait. All India was then like a tinder-box ready to explode against the Raj. Students of Calcutta sparked the explosion on 21 November 1945 and braved British bullets demanding the release of all INA prisoners. The entire working class of greater Calcutta went on general strike on 22 November 1945 and forgetting war-time quarrels, Congressmen, Muslim Leaguers and Communists marched shoulder to shoulder. The Congress, the League, and the Red Flags were tied together and displayed on all major street corners. Describing all this graphically, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, a nationalist English daily of Calcutta, commented that this was a veritable national revolt to end British rule in India and that it is Subhas Chandra's INA that was acting as the main driving force of the revolt.

On 18 February 1946, the revolt of the Indian ratings of the Royal Indian Navy started on HMS *Talwar*, a trainee ship of the Indian Navy anchored in Bombay. The British first tried to crush this revolt by using Indian soldiers and Indian airmen but they refused to fire on their brothers in the navy. By the end of 20 February 1946, the entire R.I.N. was in revolt. Ratings in 78 ships in Bombay, Karachi, Madras, Calcutta, Vizag and Cochin tore up the Union Jack and hoisted instead three flags — that of the Congress, the Muslim League and the Communist Party — symbolising the unity of the entire Indian anti-imperialist forces.

The Indian Army did not openly revolt but the rumblings of the volcano were noted by all far-sighted British military officers. Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck sent out a grim warning to Prime Minister Attlee and the British Cabinet on 1 December 1945, that a massive popular revolt against the Raj was about to break out in India in which the Indian armed forces may also take part taking their cue from the role of the INA.

It was clear that Britain could not hold India any longer. Britain's Prime Minister Attlee announced on 20 February 1946 that full independence would be granted to India and a Cabinet Mission would be sent to India to negotiate the details of the transfer of power.

Subhas Bose and his INA militarily perhaps did not achieve much—they could only hoist the National Flag near Kohima. But their example fired the imagination of the entire Indian people—civilians and soldiers alike. The legend of Subhas Chandra Bose and the INA sparked off the most colossal united upsurge of the entire Indian people against the Raj in February 1946, with the Indian armed forces also on the brink of revolt. That was what forced the British to retreat and finally transfer power to Indians. These are the stubborn facts of history. Unfortunately, these are not fully recognized and reflected in either popular or scholarly writings.

A few words need to be said regarding the debate on whether Subhas Chandra had or had not strong ideological tilt towards fascism and whether his final alliance with the Axis Powers was at all a correct strategy. Jawaharlal Nehru, a big section of radical Congressmen, as well as the Communist Party of India, during the Second World War pinpointed the Fascist Axis Powers as the most dangerous enemies of human freedom and they basically chose the Allied Anti-Fascist camp as their allies. The differences between Subhas Chandra Bose and the C.P.I. were too profound and basic to patch up and they stood poised in two opposite camps.

Looking back now, it has to be clearly admitted by Communist and anti-fascist historians that their war-time assessment about Subhas Chandra Bose being a kind of quisling of the Axis Powers, was utterly wrong and has not been borne out by historical evidence obtained in later years. Rather, all evidence known to this day clearly indicates that Subhas Chandra Bose, in very difficult and unfavourable conditions, kept intact his independent stand and refused to become a cat's paw in the hands of either Hitler or Tojo. Clearest evidence of this is his refusal to allow the Indian Legion in Germany to be used against the Soviet Union and again his refusal to allow the INA to be used against Aung San and the A.F.P.F.L., the nationalist organisation which he led, in Burma after their anti-Japanese resistance struggle had started on 27 March 1945.

Nonetheless, it has also to be categorically admitted by

historians and activists who admire Netaji in an unqualified manner that despite Subhas Chandra's noble patriotic motives of the highest order, his historical perspective was basically wrong during the Second World War because he failed to assess the Axis Powers as the potential aspirants for domination over the whole world — the most monstrous imperialist dictatorship to have appeared on the arena of human history.

Hitler's totally contemptuous attitude towards Subhas Chandra's Indian Legion should also be noted. In the one recorded reference to it, Hitler said, "The Indian Legion is a joke. There are Indians who cannot kill a louse, they will not kill an Englishman either. I consider it nonsense to put them opposite the English If we used Indians to turn prayer mills they would be the most indefatigable soldiers in the world".

Aung San in Burma, and Soekarno and others in Indonesia had initially chosen tactics similar to that of Subhas Chandra Bose. But a couple of years of Japanese rule made the scales fall from their eyes and they realized the true character of Japanese fascism. So taking their cue from Ho Chi Minh of Vietnam, they forged a broad anti-fascist alliance and organised national uprisings for the liberation of their countries, synchronising their timings with the downfall of Japanese imperialism. Perhaps, Subhas Chandra was also thinking on similar lines as is indicated by his desperate desire to contact the Soviet army in Manchuria. It was at this turning point that the mysterious air crash took place and ended the meteoric career of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

The legacy that he has left behind is enormous. Through all his activities he held up the model of total dedication and continuous sacrifice in the cause of the motherland before the younger generation of today and tomorrow. Also, in his very first speech after the formation of the Provisional Azad Hind Government on 21 October 1943, Subhas Chandra passionately upheld the ideal of the unity of all Indians, irrespective of religion and caste. He chose Hindustani as the *lingua franca* of India, a mixture of Hindi and Urdu, to be written in the Roman script, to keep open the window to the

world. From 1928 till 1945, Subhas Chandra had repeatedly declared that he always stood for a completely independent, socialist republic of India based on secular principles. This is the heritage of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. In this year of his birth centenary, it is up to all Indians, especially young men and women, to imbibe and defend these values. Only in that way we can pay real homage to the memory of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

APPENDIX-I

Role of the Youth Movement

(Speech at the Third Session of the All-India Youth Congress, Calcutta, 25 December 1928)

On behalf of the Reception Committee of the Third Session of the All-India Youth Congress, I accord you a most hearty welcome on your visit to this city of ours. The fact that the third session of the Congress is being held this year is an unmistakable indication of the growing vitality of the youth movement.

There is probably some apprehension that this year the proceedings of the All-India Youth Congress may be somewhat overshadowed by the deliberations of the Indian National Congress and of the All-Parties Convention — but nothing to my mind can detract from the intrinsic importance of a congegeration like the Youth Congress. Without minimizing in any way the importance of political problems in our life, I would maintain that the problems of the youth are vital problems, they have an importance of their own. And, we who are members of the Republic of Youth attach great value and significance to them. I have no doubt that the deliberations of this Congress will be carried on with a sense of selousness commensurate with the responsibility which has been cast on our shoulders. I have no doubt that this Congress will give a definite lead to the youth of this country on some of the most vital problems of our present-day life. I, therefore, consider it a priviledge and an honour that I should be authorized by the Reception Committee to welcome you on such an important occasion.

If we cast our eyes beyond our frontiers and take a bird's eye-view of the march of world events, there is one outstanding phenomenon which greets us in every land, and that is the renaissnace of youth. From North to South, from East to West wherever we may happen to glance, the Youth movement has become a reality. It is necessary for us to be clear in our own minds what

the characteristics of the Youth Movement are, what are its mainsprings on the one side and its ultimate objective on the other.

Any association of young men or women does not deserve the designation of a youth association. A social service league or a famine relief society is not necessarily a youth association. A youth association is characterized by a feeling of dissatisfaction with the present order of things, and a desire for a better order accompanied by a vision of that order. Youth movements are not reformist in outlook but revolutionary. A feeling of restlessness, of impatience with the present order, must come into existence before any youth movement can start. Personally, I do not consider such a movement to be a twentieth-century phenomenon or an accidental phenomenon. From the time of Socrates and Buddha, men have been inspired by the vision of a better world and under that inspiration have endeavored to reconstruct society. The youth movements of the modern age are characterized by a similar vision and a similar effort. whether it is Bolshevism in Russia or Fascism in Italy or the Young Turk movement in Turkey, whether it is a movement in China or in Persia or in Germany, everywhere you will find the same impulse, vision and objective. Wherever the older generation of leaders have failed, youth have become self-conscious and have taken upon themselves the responsibility of reconstructing society and of guiding it on towards a better and nobler state of existence.

Friends, let us now come nearer home. It is not only the youths of Germany, Russia, Italy and China who are roused. Even in this land of lotus-eaters the awakening has come. I firmly believe that it is an awakening from within and not merely as a ferment on the surface. The youth of India are no longer content with handing over all responsibility to their older leaders and sitting down with folded hands or following like dumb driven cattle. They have realized that it is for them to create a new India — free, great and powerful. They have accepted the responsibility, they have prepared themselves for the consequences, and they are now busy schooling themselves for the great task that awaits them. At this critical juncture, it is the duty of well-wishers of India to speak out fearlessly what they think of the movement or movements going on today. It has to be analysed critically, what defects there are have to be ruthlessly exposed and the entire movement has to be guided along healthy and fruitful channels.

As I look round me today, I am struck by two schools of thought about which it is my duty to speak out openly and fearlessly. I am

referring to the two schools of thought which have their centres at Sabarmati and Pondicherry. I am not considering the fundamental philosophy underlying these two schools of thought. This is not the time for metaphysical speculation. I shall talk to you today as a pragmatist, as one who will judge the intrinsic values of any school of thought not from a metaphysical point of view but from experience of its actual effects and consequences.

The actual effect of the propaganda carried on by the Sabarmati school of thought is to create a feeling and an impression that modernism is bad, that large-scale production is an evil, that wants should not be increased, that the standard of living should not be raised, but we must endeavour to the best of our ability to go back to the days of the bullock-cart, and that the soul is so important that physical culture and military training can well be ignored.

The actual effect of the propaganda carried on by the Pondicherry school of thought is to create a feeling and an impression that there is nothing higher or nobler than peaceful contemplation, that Yoga means *pranayama* and *dhyana*, that while action may be tolerated as good, this particular brand of Yoga is something higher and better. This propaganda has led many a man to forget that spiritual progress under the present-day conditions is possible only by ceaseless and unselfish action, that the best way to conquer nature is to fight her, and it is weakness to seek refuge in contemplation when we are hemmed in on all sides by dangers and difficulties.

It is the passivism, not philosophic but actual, inculcated by these schools of thought against which I protest. In this holy land of ours *Ashrams* are not new institutions and ascetics and Yogis are not novel phenomena; they have held and they will continue to hold an honoured place in society. But it is not their lead that we shall have to follow if we are to create a new India, at once free, happy and great.

Friends, you will pardon me if in a fit of outspokenness I have trod on you sentiments. As I have just said, I do not for one moment consider the fundamental philosophy underlying the two schools of thought but the actual consequences from a pragmatic point of view. In India we want today a philosophy of activism. We must be inspired by robust optimism. We have to live in the present and to adapt ourselves to modern conditions.

We can no longer live in an isolated corner of the world. When India is free, she will have to fight her modern enemies with modern methods, both in the economic and in the political spheres. The days of the bullock-cart are gone and gone for ever. The free world

must prepare itself for any eventuality as long as the whole world does not accept whole-heartedly the policy of disarmament.

I am not one of those who in their zeal for modernism forget the glories of the past. We must take our stand on our past. India has a culture of her own which she must continue to develop along her own distinctive channels. In philosophy, literature, art and science we have something new to give to the world which the world eagerly awaits. In a word, we must arrive at a synthesis. Some of our best thinkers and workers are already engaged in this important task. We must resist the cry of 'Back to the Vedas' on the one side and on the other side the meaningless craze of modern Europe for fashion and change. It is difficult to restrict a living movement within proper bounds, but I believe that if the pioneers and the leaders of the movement are on the whole on the right track, things will take proper shape in due time.

Friends, one word more and I have done. The present year is a landmark not only in the history of our political movement but also in the history of the Indian Youth Movement. I hope and pray that this session will give a bold and definite lead to the youth of this country. We are fortunate today in welcoming as our President one who needs no introduction to the youth of this country, Mr Nariman of Bombay.

APPENDIX-II

Students and Politics

(Presidential address at the Students' Conference held at Lahore, 19 October 1929)

I thank you from the very core of my heart for the warm and cordial welcome you have given me on the occasion of my first visit to the sacred land of the five rivers. I know how little I deserve the honour and the welcome which you have been pleased to accord me, and my only wish today is that I may be a little more worthy of the kindness and hospitality with which I have been greeted here.

You have summoned me from distant Calcutta to come and speak to you. Why have you summoned me of all persons? Is it because the East and the West should meet to solve their common problems? Is it because Bengal, which was the first to come under the foreign yoke and the Punjab, which was the last to be enslaved, have need of each other? Or is it because you and I have something in common — sharing the same thoughts and cherishing the same aspirations? And what an irony of fate that you want me — once an expelled student of a sister university — to address a gathering of students at Lahore! Can you object if our elders complain that the time is out of joint, for strange persons and novel ideas now find favour with the world? If you have invited me with full knowledge of my past record, you ought really to be able to anticipate what I am going to say.

Friends, you will pardon me if at the very outset I take this opportunity of giving public utterance, however feeble it may be, to the feelings of gratitude that surge within me as I think of what the Punjab — and particularly the youth of the Punjab — has done for Jatindranath Das and his co-sufferers from Bengal during their stay in the Punjab jails. The arrangement for their defence, the extreme anxiety and solicitude felt for them as long as they were on hunger-strike and the sympathy, affection and honour bestowed on Jatin during his lifetime and after have stirred the heart of Bengal to its depths. Not content with what they had done at Lahore,

prominent members of the Defence Committee travelled all the way to Calcutta to escort the mortal remains of the great martyr and hand them over to us there. We are an emotional people, and the largeness of your heart has endeared you to us in an indescribable degree. Bengal will ever remember with thankfulness and gratitude what the Punjab did for her in one of her darkest days.

One of your distinguished leaders was describing to us once in Calcutta, while referring to the great martyr, how the sun rose in the East and set in the West and how, after sunset, the moon rose in the West and travelled back to the East.

Thus did Jatin live and die. From Calcutta to Lahore he travelled in life, and after death his mortal remains went back to Calcutta. They went back not as dead clay but as a symbol of something pure, noble and divine. Jatin today is not dead. He lives up in the heavens as a star of "purest ray serene" to serve as a beacon-light to posterity. He lives in his immortal sacrifice. He lives as a vision, as an ideal, as an emblem of what is purest and noblest in humanity.

And I believe that he has through his self-immolation not only roused the soul of India, but has also forged an indissoluble tie between the two provinces where he was born and where he died. I, therefore, envy your great city which has been the *tapasyakshetra* — the place of panance — of this modern Dadhichi.

As we are gradually approaching the dawn of freedom, our cup of suffering and sorrow is becoming full. It is but natural that our rulers, like despots elsewhere, should become more and more relentless as they find power gradually slipping out of their hands.

And one should not be surprised if by and by they cast off all pretension to civilization and rid themselves of the mask of decency in order that the mailed fist may be used freely and without hesitation. Punjab and Bengal are at the present moment enjoying the largest doses of repression. This is indeed a matter for congratulation for we are thereby qualifying for *Swaraj* in an effective manner. The spirits of heroes like Bhagat Singh and Batukeswar Dutt cannot be cowed down by repression; on the contrary, it is through repression and suffering, through humiliation and sorrow, that heroes will be made. Let us, therefore, welcome repression with all our heart and make fullest use of it when it comes.

Little do you know how much Bengali literature has drawn from the earlier history of the Punjab in order to enrich itself and edify its readers. Tales of your heroes have been composed and sung by our great poets including Rabindranath Tagore and some of them are today familiar in every Bengali home. Aphorisms of your saints have

been translated into elegant Bengali and they afford solace and inspiration to millions in Bengal. This cultural contact has its counterpart in the political sphere and we find your political pilgrims meeting ours not only in the jails in India but also in the jails of distant Burma and in the wilds of the Andamans across the seas.

Friends, I shall make no apology if in this discourse I refer at length to political questions and endeavour to answer them. I know that there are people in this country — even eminent personages — who think that a subject race has no politics and that students in particular should have nothing to do with politics. But my own view is that a subject race has nothing but politics. In a dependent country every problem that you can think of, when analysed properly, will be found at bottom a political problem. Life is one whole, as the late Deshbandhu C.R. Das used to say and you cannot therefore separate politics from education. Human life cannot be split up into compartments.

I cannot understand why a special ban should be imposed on participation in politics if no such ban is imposed on national work in general. I can understand a ban on all national work, but a ban merely on political work is meaningless. If, in a dependent country, all problems are fundamentally political problems, then all national activity is in reality political in character. There is no ban on participation in politics in any free country; on the contrary students are encouraged to take part in politics. This encouragement is deliberately given because out of the ranks of the students arise political thinkers and politicians. If, in India, students do not take active part in politics, from where are we to recruit our political workers and where are we to train them? Further, it has to be admitted that participation in politics is necessary for the development of character and manhood.

Thought without action cannot suffice to build character, and for this reason participation in healthy activity — political, social or artistic — is necessary for developing character. Book-worms, gold-medalists and office clerks are not what universities should endeavour to produce, but men of character who will become great by achieving greatness for their country in different spheres of life.

One of the most encouraging signs of the times is the growth of a genuine students' movement all over India. This movement I consider to be a phase of the wider youth movement. There is a great deal of difference between a students' conference of today and those of the previous decade. The latter were generally held under official auspices and on the gateway appeared the motto, "Though

shall not talk about politics". These conferences should in a manner be compared with those sessions of the Indian National Congress in the earlier stages of its history, where the first resolution passed was one confirming our loyalty to the King-Emperor. We have fortunately outgrown that stage not only in the Indian National Congress, but also in the students' movement. The students' conferences of today meet in a freer atmosphere, and those who participate in these conferences think and talk as they like, subject to the restrictions imposed by the Indian Penal Code.

The youth movement of today is characterized by a feeling of restlessness, of impatience with the present order of things, and by an intense desire to usher in a new and better era. A sense of responsibility and a spirit of self-sacrifice pervade this movement. Youths of the present day no longer feel content to hand over all responsibility to their elders. They rather feel that the country and the country's future belong more to them than to the elder generation. It is therefore their bounden duty to accept the fullest responsibility for the future of their country and to equip themselves for the proper discharge of that responsibility. The students' movement, being a phase of the larger youth movement, is inspired by the same outlook, psychology and purpose as the latter.

The students' movement of today is not a movement of irresponsible boys and girls. It is a movement of responsible, though young, men and women who are inspired with the one ideal of developing their character and personality and thereby rendering the most effective and useful service to the cause of their country. This movement has, or should have, two lines of activity. In the first place it should deal with the problems which relate exclusively to the student population of the day and endeavour to equip them for the battle of life. For this purpose it should give the student a foretaste of the problems and activities that are likely to confront him when he enters the arena of life.

The first aspect of the students movement, to which I have just referred, may not in the ordinary course of things be looked upon with disfavour by the powers that be, though the other aspect of the movement is likely to be discouraged, condemned and even thwarted. It is not necessary for me to attempt to give a detailed programme of what you should undertake under the first head. That will depend partly on your own special needs and partly on the arrangements, if any, that are made by the educational authorities to fulfil those needs. Every student requires a strong and healthy physique and sound character and a brain full of useful information and healthy,

dynamic ideas. If the arrangements provided by the authorities do not conduce to the proper growth of physique, character and intellect, you will have to provide facilities which will ensure that growth. And if the authorities welcome your efforts in this direction, all the better for you; but if they do not, leave them alone and go your own way. Your life is your own and the responsibility for developing it is after all yours, more than anybody else's.

In this connection there is one suggestion I have to offer. I wish our students' associations could start co-operative *Swadeshi* stores within their respective jurisdiction for the exclusive benefit of the student population. If these stores are run efficiently by the students themselves, they will serve a dual purpose. On the one hand, *Swadeshi* goods will be made available to the students at a cheap price and thereby home industries will be encouraged. On the other hand, students can acquire experience in running cooperative stores and can utilise the profits for advancing the welfare of the student community.

For advancing the cause of students' welfare, other items in your programme would be physical culture societies, gymnasiums, study circles, debating societies, magazine and music clubs, libraries and reading rooms, social service leagues, etc.

The other and probably more important aspect of the students' movement is the training of the future citizen. This training will be both intellectual and practical. We shall have to hold out before the students a vision of the ideal society which they should try to realize in their own lifetime. They should chalk out for themselves a programme of action which they should try to follow to the best of their ability, so that while performing their duties as students they may at the same time prepare themselves for their post-university career. It is in this sphere of activity that there is a likelihood of conflict with the authorities. Whether the conflict will actually arise or not depends largely on the attitude of the educational and governmental authorities. If the conflict does unfortunately arise, there is no help for it and students should once for all make up their minds to be absolutely fearless and self-reliant in the matter of preparing themselves, through thought and action, for their post-university career.

Before I proceed to give you my conception of the ideal that we should all cherish, I shall, with your permission, indulge in a digression which will not be altogether irrelevant. There is hardly any Asiatic today to whom the spectacle of Asia lying strangled at the feet of Europe does not cause pain and humiliation. But I want

you to get rid of the idea, once for all, that Asia has always been in this stage. Europe may be the top dog today but time was when Asia was the top dog. History tells us how, in days of old. Asia conquered and held sway over a large portion of Europe, and those days Europe was mighty afraid of Asia. The tables are turned now, but the wheel of fortune is still moving and there is no cause for despair. Asia is at the present moment busy throwing off the yoke of thralldom, and the time is not far off when rejuvenated Asia will rise resplendent in power and glory out of the darkness of the past and take her legitimate place in the comity of free nations.

The immortal East sometimes stigmatized by the hustlers from the West as "unchanging", just as Turkey was once upon a time called the "Sick Man of Europe". But this abuse can no longer apply to Asia in general or to Turkey in particular. From Japan to Turkey and from Siberia to Ceylon the entire Orient is astir. Everywhere there is change, there is progress, there is conflict with custom, authority and traditions. The East is unchanging as long as she chooses to be so, but once she resolves to move, she can progress faster than even Western nations. This is what is happening in Asia at the present day.

We are sometimes asked if the activity and the agitation that we witness in Asia, and particularly in India, are signs of real life or whether they are simply reactions to external stimuli. Even dead organisms can react to stimuli and one has to be sure that the movements we behold are not like the reflex actions of muscles that are dead. My conviction is that the test of life is creative activity, and when we find that present day movements give evidence of originality and creative genius, we feel sure that we are really alive as a nation and that the renaissance that we witness in different spheres of our national life is a genuine awakening from within.

Indian civilization has emerged out of the dark ages and is now entering on a new lease of life. At one time there was a genuine danger that our civilization might die a normal death like the civilizations of Phoenicia and Babylon. But it has once again survived the onslaught of time. If we want to continue the work of rejuvenation that has begun, we must bring about a revolution of ideas, in the world of thought and an intermingling of blood on the biological plane. Unless we refuse to accept the verdict of history and the considered opinion of thinkers like Sir Flinders Petrie, we have to admit that it is only by this means that old and work-out civilizations can be rejuvenated. If you do not accept this view of mine, you will have to discover by your own investigation the law underlying the

rise and fall of civilizations. Once we succeed in discovering this law, we shall be able to advise our countrymen as to what is necessary for us to do if we are to create a new healthy and progressive nation in this ancient land of ours.

If we are to bring about a revolution of ideas we have first to hold up before us an ideal which will galvanize our whole life. That ideal is freedom. But freedom is a word which has a varied connotation and, even in our country, the conception of freedom has undergone a process of evolution. By freedom I mean all-round freedom i.e. freedom for the individual as well as for society; freedom for the rich as well as for the poor; freedom for all individuals and for all classes. This freedom implies not only emancipation from political bondage but also equal distribution of wealth, abolition of caste barriers and social inequities, and destruction of communalism and religious intolerance. This is an ideal which may appear utopian to hard-headed men and women but this ideal alone can appease the hunger of the soul.

The only method of achieving freedom is for us to think and feel as free men. Let there be a complete revolution within and let us be thoroughly intoxicated with the wine of freedom. It is only freedom-intoxicated men and women who will be able to free humanity. When the "will to be free" is roused within us we shall then proceed to plunge headlong into an ocean of activity. The voice of caution will no longer deter us, and the lure of truth and glory will lead us on to our cherished goal.

Friends, I have tried to tell you something about what I feel, think and dream about my life's goal and what is at present the motive-power behind all my activities. Whether this will attract you or not, I do not know. But one thing to me is perfectly clear ; life has but one meaning and one purpose, namely freedom from bondage of every kind. This hunger after freedom is the song of the soul — and the very first cry of the new born babe is a cry of revolt against the bondage in which it finds itself. Rouse this intense desire for freedom within yourselves and in your countrymen and I am sure India will be free in no time.

India is bound to be free, of that there is not the slightest doubt. It is to me as sure as day follows night. There is no power on earth which can keep India in bondage any longer. But let us dream of an India for which it would be worth while to give all that we have — even life itself — and for which we could sacrifice our dearest and nearest. I have given you my own conception of freedom and I have tried to portray before you India as I want her to be. Let a completely

emancipated India preach to the world her new gospel of freedom.

Even at the risk of being called a chauvinist, I would say to my countrymen that India has a mission to fulfil, and it is because of this that India still lives. There is nothing mystic in this word 'Mission'. India has something original to contribute to the culture and civilization of the world in almost every department of human life. In the midst of her present degradation and slavery, the contribution she has been making is by no means a small one. Just imagine for a moment how great her contribution will be, once she is free to develop along her own lines and in accordance with her own requirements.

There are people in this country — and some of them eminent and respectable personages — who will not agree to an all-round application of the principle of freedom. We are sorry if we cannot please them, but in no circumstances can we give up an ideal which is based on truth, justice and equality. We shall go our own way whether others join us or not, but you can rest assured that even if a few desert us, thousands and even millions will ultimately join our army of freedom. Let us have no compromise with bondage, injustice and inequality.

Friends, It is time for all lovers of freedom to bind themselves into one happy fraternity and form the army of freedom. Let this army send out not only soldiers to fight the battle of freedom but also missionaries to propagate the new cult of freedom. It is from amongst you that these missionaries and these soldiers will have to be created. In our programme of action we must have intensive and extensive propaganda on the one hand, and a country-wide volunteers organization on the other. Our missionaries will have to go amongst the peasants and factory workers and preach the new message. They will have to inspire the youth and organize youth leagues all over the country. And last, but not least they will have to rouse the entire womenfolk of the country for women must now come forward to take their place in society and in the body politic as equal partners of men.

Many of you must be now training yourselves for joining the session of the Indian National Congress. The Indian National Congress is undoubtedly the supreme national organization in this country. In it all our hopes are centred. But the Indian National Congress itself depends, and should depend for its strength, influence, and power, on such movements as the labour movement, youth movement, peasant movement, women's movement and the students' movement. If we succeed in organizing our labour,

peasantry, depressed classes, youths, students and womenfolk, we shall be able to raise such a force in the country as will make the Indian National Congress a potent movement for achieving our political liberation. If, therefore, you want the Indian National Congress to work effectively, you will at the same time have to promote the allied movements to which I have referred.

Next door to us is China. Let us therefore take a leaf out of recent Chinese history. See what the students in China have done for their mother country. Can we not do the same for India? The renaissance in modern China is due almost wholly to the activities of Chinese students, both men and women. They have, on the one hand gone out to the villages and into the towns and factories to preach the message of freedom, and on the other hand they have organized the whole country from one end to the other. We shall have to do the same thing in India. There is no royal road to freedom. The path to freedom is no doubt a thorny one, but it is also a path which leads to glory and immortality. Let us break with the past, destroy all the shackles which have bound us for ages, and like true pilgrims, let us march shoulder to shoulder towards our destined goal of freedom. Freedom means life, and death in the pursuit of freedom means glory imperishable. Let us therefore resolve to be free, at least die in the pursuit of freedom. Let us show by our conduct and character that we are worthy of being the countrymen of the great martyr Jatindranath Das.

APPENDIX-III

At Bahadur Shah's Tomb

(Speech at Mausoleum of Bahadur Shah in Rangoon, 26 September 1943)

Your Excellency Dr Ba Maw and friends! Today we have assembled here near the tomb of Bahadur Shah, the last Emperor of Free India. It is a strange coincidence of history that while the remains of India's last Emperor rest on the soil of Burma, the remains of the last King of Free Burma now rest on the soil of India. We in India and in Burma have all along felt bound together historically by the most profound ties. And this coincidence of history is one of the most convincing proofs of the ties between your Excellency's nation and ours.

We are, both of our nations, engaged in a common fight against our common foe and we therefore consider it to be in the fitness of things to have a small celebration before the mortal remains of our last Emperor so that on the one side we might rouse the fire that burns within us and, at the same time strengthen further the ties that have bound Burma and India so long and that will bind us together for all times. We are profoundly grateful to Your Excellency and to the honourable members of the Government for the honour that has been done to us by your gracious presence at this function, a function which is pregnant with important and historical events in the days to come.

Once again I should like to express our unshakable determination to fight along with our Burmese friends, shoulder to shoulder, assured of the magnanimous help and support of Nippon so that we may bring about the final overthrow of British Imperialism which will on the one side bring India her lost liberty and at the same time remove once for all the menace to Burma's safety and independence.

This time we express our unshakable determination before a sacred memorial before the mortal remains of our last fighter for

India's freedom, the man who was an Emperor among men and at the same time a man among Emperors. We cherish the memory of Bahadur Shah. We Indians, regardless of religious faiths, cherish his memory not because he was the man who gave the clarion call to his countrymen to fight the enemy from without but because he was the man under whose flag fought Indians from all provinces. Indians professing different religious faiths, the man under whose sacred flag Muslims and Hindus and Sikhs or at least the freedom loving Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, fought side by side in the war that has been dubbed by the English historians as the Sepoy Mutiny but which we Indians call the First War of Independence. And now when we are engaged in the last war for India's independence, it is all the more necessary for us to renew our unshakable determination to fight this last war to finish, regardless of all sufferings and sacrifices, regardless of all difficulties on our path, regardless of the length of this war, so that at long last the common enemy of Burma and India will be finally overthrown and we will be free not only within our homes but free as comrades marching shoulder to shoulder to fulfil the common destiny of mankind.

Your Excellency, with us it is the practice to offer donations and contributions at Shrines like this. As a token of our inner feelings and faith I can think of no better donation or *nazar* than to offer in the name of the last hero of India's first war of Independence, Emperor Bahadur Shah, a small contribution of Rs. 2,50,000 to be handed over to your Excellency as a very small token of our love and admiration for Burma and all that Burma stands for, a small donation which Your Excellency may utilize in a manner considered best by yourself.

And now I shall close these few remarks by quoting the English meaning of a couplet which was composed by Bahadur Shah: *As long as the last particle of faith exists in the souls of India's freedom fighters, the sword of India shall continue to penetrate the heart of London.*

APPENDIX-IV

Proclamation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind

*(Text of the Proclamation setting up the Provisional Government of
Azad Hind, Singapore, 21 October 1943)*

After their first defeat at the hands of the British in 1757 in Bengal, the Indian people fought an uninterrupted series of hard and bitter battles over a stretch of one hundred years. The history of this period teems with examples of unparalleled heroism and self-sacrifice. And, in the pages of that history, the names of Siraj-ud-daula and Mohanlal of Bengal, Haider Ali, Tipu Sultan and Velu Tampi of South India, Appa Sahib Bhonsle and Peshwa Baji Rao of Maharashtra, the Begums of Oudh, Sardar Shyam Singh Atariwala of Punjab and last, but not least, Rani Lakshmi of Jhansi, Tantia Tope, Maharaj Kunwar Singh of Dumraon and Nana Sahib — among others — the names of all these warriors are for ever engraved in letters of gold. Unfortunately for us, our forefathers did not at first realize that the British constituted a grave threat to the whole of India and they did not therefore put up a united front against the enemy. Ultimately, when the Indian people were roused to the reality of the situation, they made a concerted move — and under the flag of Bahadur Shah in 1857, they fought their last war as free men. In spite of a series of brilliant victories in the early stages of this war, ill-luck and faulty leadership gradually brought about their final collapse and subjugation. Nevertheless, such heroes as the Rani of Jhansi, Tantia Tope, Kunwar Singh and Nana Sahib live like eternal stars in the nation's memory to inspire us to greater deeds of sacrifice and valour.

Forcibly disarmed by the British after 1857 and subjected to terror and brutality, the Indian people lay prostrate for a while but with the birth of the Indian National Congress in 1885, there came a new awakening. From 1885 till the end of the last World War, the Indian people, in their endeavour to recover their lost liberty, tried

all possible methods — namely, agitation and propaganda, boycott of British goods, terrorism and sabotage — and finally armed revolution. But all these efforts failed for a time. Ultimately in 1920, when the Indian people, haunted by a sense of failure, were groping for a new method, Mahatma Gandhi came forward with the new weapon of non-cooperation and civil disobedience.

For two decades thereafter the Indian people went through a phase of intense patriotic activity. The message of freedom was carried to every Indian home. Through personal example, people were taught to suffer, to sacrifice and to die in the cause of freedom. From the centre to the remotest villages, the people were knit together into one political organisation. Thus the Indian people not only recovered their political consciousness, but became a political entity once again. They could now speak with one voice and strive with one will for one common goal. From 1937 to 1939, through the work of the Congress Ministries in eight provinces, they gave proof of their readiness and their capacity to administer their own affairs.

Thus, on the eve of the present World War, the stage was set for the final struggle for India's Liberation. During the course of this war, Germany, with the help of her allies, has dealt shattering blows to our enemy in Europe — while Nippon with the help of her allies has inflicted a knock-out blow to our enemy in East Asia. Favoured by a most happy combination of circumstances, the Indian people today have a wonderful opportunity for achieving their national emancipation.

For the first time in recent history, Indians abroad have also been politically roused and united in one organisation. They are not only thinking and feeling in tune with their countrymen at home, but are also marching in step with them, along the path to freedom. In East Asia, in particular, over two million Indians are now organised as one solid phalanx, inspired by slogan of 'Total Mobilisation'. And in front of them stand the serried ranks of India's Army of Liberation, with the slogan 'Onward to Delhi' on their lips.

Having goaded Indians to desperation by its hypocrisy and having driven them to starvation and death by plunder and loot, British rule in India has forfeited the goodwill of the Indian people altogether and is now living a precarious existence. It needs but a flame to destroy the last vestige of that unhappy rule. To light that flame is the task of India's Army of Liberation. Assured of the enthusiastic support of the civil population at home and also of a large section of British Indian Army and backed by gallant and invincible allies abroad, but relying in the first instance on its own strength, India's

Army of Liberation is confident of fulfilling its historic role.

Now that the dawn of freedom is at hand, it is the duty of the Indian people to set up a Provisional Government of their own, and launch the last struggle under the banner of that Government. But with all the Indian leaders in prison and the people at home totally disarmed — it is not possible to set up a Provisional Government within India or to launch an armed struggle under the aegis of that Government. It is, therefore, the duty of the Indian Independence League in East Asia, supported by all patriotic Indians at home and abroad, to undertake this task — the task of setting up a Provisional Government of Azad Hind (Free India) and of conducting the last fight for freedom, with the help of the Army of Liberation (that is, the Azad Hind Fauj or the Indian National Army) organized by the League.

Having been constituted as the Provisional Government of Azad Hind by the Indian Independence League in East Asia, we enter upon our duties with a full sense of responsibility that has devolved on us. We pray that Providence may bless our work and our struggle for the emancipation of our Motherland. And we hereby pledge our lives and lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of her Freedom, of her welfare, and her exaltation among the nations of the world.

It will be the task of the Provisional Government to launch and to conduct the struggle that will bring about the expulsion of the British and of their allies from the soil of India. It will then be the task of the Provisional Government to bring about the establishment of a permanent National Government of Azad Hind constituted in accordance with the will of the Indian people and enjoying their confidence. After the British and their allies are overthrown and until a permanent National Government of Azad Hind is set up on Indian soil, the Provisional Government will administer the affairs of the country in trust for the Indian people.

The Provisional Government is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Indian. It guarantees religious liberty, as well as equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens. It declares its firm resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally and transcending all the differences cunningly fostered by an alien Government in the past.

In the name of God, in the name of bygone generations who have welded the Indian people into one nation and in the name of the dead heroes who have bequeathed to us a tradition of heroism and self-sacrifice — we call upon the Indian people to rally round

our banner and to strike for India's Freedom. We call upon them to launch the final struggle against the British and all their allies in India and to prosecute that struggle with valour and perserverance and with full faith in final victory until the enemy is expelled from Indian soil and the Indian people are once again a Free Nation.

Signed on behalf of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind:-

Subhas Chandra Bose, Head of the State, Prime Minister and Minister for War and Foreign Affairs, Supreme Commander of the Indian National Army.

Capt. Miss Lakshmi (Women's Organisation), S.A. Ayer (Publicity and Propaganda), Lt. Col. A.C. Chatterji (Finance), Lt. Col. Aziz Ahmed, Lt. Col. N.S. Bhagat, Col. J.K. Bhonsle, Lt. Col. Gulzara Singh, Lt. Col. M.Z. Kiani, Lt. Col. A.D. Loganathan, Lt. Col. Ehsan Qadir, Lt. Col. Shah Nawaz (Representatives of the Armed Forces); A.M. Sahay, Secretary (with Ministerial Rank); Rash Behari Bose (Supreme Adviser), Karim Gani, Debnath Das, D.M. Khan, A. Yellappa, J. Thivy, Sardar Ishar Singh (Advisers); A.N. Sarkar (Legal Adviser).

APPENDIX-V

Many Roads to Delhi

(Special Order of the Day on 15 August 1945, following the surrender of Japan, to the officers and men of the Azad Hind Fauj)

Comrads, in our struggle for the independence of our Motherland, we have now been overwhelmed by an undreamt-of crisis. You may perhaps feel that you have failed in your mission to liberate India. But let me tell you that this failure is only of a temporary nature. No setback and no defeat can undo your positive achievements of the past. Many of you have participated in the fight along the Indo-Burma frontier and also inside India and have gone through hardship and suffering of every sort. Many of your comrades have laid down their lives on the battlefield and have become the immortal heroes of Azad Hind. This glorious sacrifice can never go in vain.

Comrades, in this dark hour I call upon you to conduct yourselves with the discipline, dignity and strength befitting a truly Revolutionary Army. You have already given proofs of your valour and self-sacrifice on the field of battle. It is now your duty to demonstrate your undying optimism and unshakable will-power in the hour of temporary defeat. Knowing you as I do, I have not the slightest doubt that even in this dire adversity you will hold your head erect and face the future with unending hope and confidence.

Comrades, I feel that in this critical hour, thirty-eight crores of our countrymen at home are looking at us, the members of India's Army of Liberation. Therefore, remain true to India and do not for a moment waver in your faith in India's destiny. The roads to Delhi are many and Delhi still remains our goal. The sacrifices of your immortal comrades and of yourselves will certainly achieve their fulfilment. There is no power on earth that can keep India enslaved. India shall be free and before long.

Jai Hind

APPENDIX-VI

India shall be free

(Message of 16 August 1945 to Indians in East Asia)

Sisters and Brother, A glorious chapter in the history of India's struggle for freedom has just come to a close and, in that chapter, the sons and daughters of India in East Asia will have an undying place.

You set a shining example of patriotism and self-sacrifice by pouring out men, money and material into the struggle for India's independence. I shall never forget the spontaneity and enthusiasm with which you responded to my call for Total Mobilisation. You sent an unending stream of your sons and daughters to the camps to be trained as soldiers of the Azad Hind Fauj and of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. Money and materials you poured lavishly into the war chest of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. In short, you did your duty as true sons and daughters of India.

I regret, more than you do, that your sufferings and sacrifices have not borne immediate fruit. But they have not gone in vain, because they have ensured the emancipation of our Motherland and will serve as an undying inspiration to Indians all over the world. Posterity will bless your name and will talk with pride about your offerings at the altar of India's Freedom, and about your positive achievement as well.

In this unprecedented crisis in our history, I hope only one word to say. Do not be depressed at our temporary failure. Be of good cheer and keep up your spirits. Above all, never for a moment falter in your faith in India's destiny. There is no power on earth that can keep India enslaved. India shall be free and before long.

Jai Hind

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